Interview with Lucius D. Battle

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

ASSISTANT SECRETARY LUCIUS D. BATTLE

Interviewed by: Paige E. Mulhollan

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Q: Let's identify you in time and position here. When Mr. Johnson became President, you were serving as Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

BATTLE: That's correct.

Q: You had been appointed by President Kennedy?

BATTLE: I was appointed by President Kennedy in May of 1962 to that job.

Q: Had you had before that time any opportunity to make acquaintance with Mr. Johnson before he became President?

BATTLE: Well, I was trying to remember today when I first met him, and I don't really recall when that was. I saw him several times while he was Vice President, but I think my first awareness of him, not as a Senator or figure, but as a person and as a personality, really was 1957. Dean Acheson is one of my closest friends; I worked for him as his assistant while he was Secretary of State. And I recall coming to Washington—I was then vice president of colonial Williamsburg.

Q: How could anybody leave that job? I visited there not long ago. I believe if I ever got down there I'd retire happily.

BATTLE: Well, I had it a little too early in my own life. It was a lovely job. It was too lovely. I wasn't quite ready to have that kind of retirement. I may be nearer ready now, but I wasn't then.

Q: I didn't mean to interrupt you, but that seems to me like the ultimate of accomplishments.

BATTLE: Well, it was a good job, a wonderful job. But I came up during 1957 to stay with the Achesons. I was making a couple of speeches here and we were going to spend several days with the Achesons. And I remember at breakfast—the first morning that we were there—Dean Acheson had a telephone call in the middle of breakfast and went out and then came back to the table. And he said to me, “That was Senator Lyndon Johnson.” And he said, “I'm working very closely with him on the new civil rights bill,” which Acheson —somewhat to my surprise because I hadn't been aware of any particular interest of his in this—he evidenced an interest also.

And he said when he came back that Senator Johnson was really quite a remarkable man and he had enjoyed enormously his relationship with him on that particular bill. That was the first time—while I had of course known the name and been aware of him—it was the first time I had really discussed him with someone who knew him well and at the kind of level that made it quite important.

Over the next two or three years I talked with Dean Acheson and many others about him. And I remember that prior to the Convention of 1960, Acheson told me that he really thought that Johnson was the best candidate for President, and that that was his candidate, and he was for him. I was somewhat surprised; I was not at that particular point one who supported Senator Johnson for the Presidency; I had no feeling about it

one way or another. I found myself in support of Kennedy and yet from the talks that I had with Acheson and others, I developed a very real interest in Senator Johnson and later that developed into a very deep respect and admiration for him, particularly as I had the opportunity to know him in later years and to be with him.

Q: Do you know if Mr. Acheson played any role as a campaigner for Johnson in 1960 prior to the convention?

BATTLE: I don't think so. As I recall, he did not. He never takes a very active role in politics except on the sidelines. He did make it very clear to many people, the press and others, that he felt this way. It was carried in the press at the time that Senator Johnson was his choice, and he stuck with this for quite a long time. I'll let him speak for himself on his attitudes toward Senator Kennedy; he and I taped for that particular project together.

Q: Oh, did you?

BATTLE: Yes, we spent a whole day taping for the Kennedy Library. I try not to speak for other people; I only speak for myself. But I talked with him at some length about this, and I know and I have no hesitation in saying—because it was a matter of public record—that at that time he favored Senator Johnson for the President, and I think this attitude went on all during that period.

But the degree to which he was active I think was somewhat limited; he was not particularly engaged in political pursuits at that stage although he was on the Democratic Study Group, or the Policy Committee I guess it was called. And he was involved in that over those years in which the Republicans were in office and the Democrats were out.

My own involvement with later Vice President Johnson was somewhat peripheral. I really knew him only later when he became President, although I had one or two little contacts with him while he was Vice President. I recall fairly early in the Kennedy era—I came back, incidentally, to government to be Special Assistant to Dean Rusk and Executive Secretary

of the Department of State. And during that period of about two years Dean Rusk was very concerned that we make available in the Department of State to the Vice President and his office all that they wanted in terms of material and telegrams and reports and what have you.

Q: Was a man assigned to brief the Vice President periodically?

BATTLE: Yes, there were several people who worked with him during that early period. Bob Skiff was one who was with him for a short time. He was there for awhile; his job was not really to brief particularly, but to see that the Vice President and his office had everything that he wanted. I remember having a lunch with George Reedy and one or two other people in the very early days of the Kennedy era to see what we could do as a Department to keep the Vice President informed and to make available everything that he wanted. And we set up a procedure then to send over documents and summaries and briefing material and what have you to go to the Vice President's office. And Bob Skiff was for a time sort of a leg man between the Department of State and the Vice President's office.

I saw him during that period from time to time; I saw him in several periods when there were key issues on international affairs before us; he came to numerous meetings at the Department of State; I sat in on several of them. I was too lowly to have much direct contact with him, but I spoke with him on a number of occasions. I occasionally saw him socially during that period, once in awhile at Embassy parties. We had a group, I recall, that was called the Potomac Marching Society, which is little known in Washington, but it was a group of people—we had dances about three or four times a year—and the group consisted of Soapy [G. Mennen] Williams, Mac [McGeorge] Bundy and Arthur Schlesinger and a group—the list is of no importance, but there were a lot of people who were closely connected with the Administration, with the change, and he and Mrs. Johnson used to come to some of those parties. And I remember seeing him several times then; also Abe Fortas is a great friend of mine and I recall seeing him during that period before and after

he became President as a guest of the Fortases. And I remember one birthday party, for example—it was Abe Fortas' birthday and they had a party; I've forgotten where it was; the National Democratic Women's Club, I think—and it was a group of maybe fifty people. And the Johnsons were there on that occasion; there were a few instances of that sort where I saw him socially.

Q: This was still during the Kennedy period?

BATTLE: Well, it was both. I have a little trouble sorting out when one ended and when the other began. It was the latter part of the Kennedy era that I remember seeing him at the Fortases, and I recall being at one party with him and Mrs. Johnson after he became President and this was quite early in his Administration.

But my own involvement with him at that time was very, very peripheral. There was no reason whatever for him to have any contact with me.

Q: There has always been the news claim at least, that Mr. Johnson was not very much at home among the New Frontiersmen of the Kennedy years, particularly socially. Do you think that has been exaggerated?

BATTLE: Well, it depends on what you consider the New Frontiersmen.

Q: I suppose that can be defined in all sorts of ways.

BATTLE: There were a great many New Frontiersmen. I saw him during those periods and he seemed to be having a very good time, and I saw no particular problem. Certainly with the Fortases and the Cliffords and people that he had known for a long time, he was happy and certainly seemed to be at home. The New Frontier was not always kind to him; I was well aware of that. I recall hearing little remarks made that I thought were unfortunate, very unfortunate. I don't want to quote the specific person who said them to me, but there were, I think, those who were perhaps unkind to President Johnson, then Vice President

Johnson. He was not always easy either in all honesty. He was not a man who was easy to work with or for. I personally always had a very fine relationship with him as we'll come to as we go over my own relationships with him. And I never had any complaints whatever—none whatever. But there were those who did, and I think probably the New Frontier crowd in a way sort of inhibited him and brought out things in him that made him even a little more difficult than he basically was—that grew out of a kind of problem of relationship and went back in part to what happened in 1960 and all that.

Q: Well it gets important in public policy, I suppose more important other than just as a matter of social contact, when he becomes President—whether or not those people are capable of giving the kind of loyalty to Mr. Johnson as President that they might have given. Do you think that most of them did?

BATTLE: Loyalty is a hard thing to define. I think that most of them who remained were certainly at a minimum loyal to the office, and I think their disloyalty, if you can call it that—that probably is an overstatement—was given to an excess of relationship to the past, and found its expression in sort of sniping and snarling remarks, probably to those that they felt wouldn't—I had no newspaper column and am notoriously discreet in dealing with them, and I may have heard comments that were unfortunate. There was not an entire happiness but part of it, I think, was defensible in the sense of their being such enormous emotion and bitterness following the assassination of President Kennedy.

This is a hard thing to assess, a hard thing to assess. The press of our country is always given to exaggerate this kind of thing; it made a better story.

Q: They'll pick it up too, even though it's confidential?

BATTLE: They will make it up too. Whether it exists or not—they will create it. And I think this was part of it. I suspect that the disloyalty was much less real than it was imagined, but I think there was a kind of nostalgia and a sadness in a lot of those around the President, even among those who remained, that made it difficult for them quite to relate to

the new President and the new situation in quite the degree that they had in the past. And that's understandable.

Q: After he became President, did he come into contact with you directly in your position at that time as Assistant Secretary?

BATTLE: Not to any great extent. I had a great deal of contact with the staff and with others. It was a period in which he was so consumed with major problems; and educational and cultural affairs, in which he evidenced a great interest later, were obviously not the things on the very front burner. They were relatively unimportant in terms of what he was facing. Therefore, he took no particular part in these matters, although he had members of his staff do so.

And I recall one period in which he appointed Abe Fortas and Isaac Stern, the violinist, Pierre Salinger and me to study what should be done with respect to the Advisory Committee on the Arts; this led to the creation of the job that Roger Stevens held for him during the majority of his Administration. In fact it was I who suggested Roger; Abe and Pierre and Isaac—all of them were good friends of mine—wanted me to take the job of advisory chairman, or whatever he is called—special assistant for the arts [Chairman, National Council on the Arts], in addition to the job of Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs. I felt this was very wrong. I felt that it indicated that they didn't know the extent to which I was working a schedule that just couldn't have much added to it with any real accomplishment; and I was very much opposed to this. I had to talk them out of it, and then they kept saying, “Well, if you don't do it, who does do it?” And they felt there was merit in combining the international and the domestic; and I felt that they should be separate, primarily because I believed that there was a great amount of work to be done in the international, for which I was responsible. And I suggested Roger, and this, I think, has worked out extremely well; this is certainly my impression and I haven't had a great deal to do with it over the last several years.

Then about, I suppose, May of 1964—this was only a few months. You see, I really was not in that job very long under the Johnson Administration—the assassination was November 22 and in May there began to be various talk of moving me to other things. There was, I thought, one rather unfortunate—and I can't say all of this without it sounding a bit egotistical, and I don't mean it to be so; but if I held the story, it must be, I think a little bit. I became very close to Bill Fulbright during the period I was Assistant Secretary of Educational and Cultural Affairs. As you know he had been a very close friend of President Johnson's, and he was the author of the exchange program for which I was responsible. I saw a great deal of him during all those years that I was in charge of that program and used to go up and see him every few weeks and have a chat with him about what was going on, keep him informed on things that were happening.

President Johnson, on the recommendation of a combination of George Ball and Dean Rusk, asked me to become Ambassador to Egypt. I had turned down several other Ambassadorial appointments that didn't seem to me to be much more than ceremonial things, and I had not been interested in that kind of Ambassadorship. When this one came along, it was so obviously difficult and so obviously important and in a setting that seemed to me to be extremely interesting that I immediately wanted to take that one and ended up doing so.

The standard procedure is that a notification go to the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee informing him that an appointment of that level is to be made and giving him—it goes also, I think, to the leadership, a similar letter—giving him twenty-four hours or so to indicate objection. Bill Fulbright and I had become very good friends during that period, and I told the Congressional Liaison office of the Department of State that I was a little concerned as to whether Fulbright would like my departure, because we had gotten along very well and he of course considered, and still considers, based on a letter I had from him last week, that the program is of special importance. It also carries his name.

Q: He's my Senator, incidentally.

BATTLE: You're Arkansas too?

Q: I'm from Fayetteville. My permanent job is teaching at the University of Arkansas. And I have had the pleasure of introducing Fulbright several times and consider him a very good friend.

BATTLE: In spite of all that has happened, I have a good deal of admiration for him—not entirely, but a great deal.

But I told the Congressional office that I expected that Bill Fulbright would have a bit more than a casual interest in my departure from the job of Assistant Secretary of Educational and Cultural Affairs. As it happened, the letter went up to him and the following day, within the twenty-four hours—I think it was twenty-four—in which he is permitted to indicate objection or view, I had one of my regular routine meetings with him. And I walked into the office, and he was absolutely livid. He said he did not want me to leave Educational and Cultural Affairs; that he felt I had not really stayed long enough to accomplish all that he and I had many times said should be accomplished in that field, and he was bitterly opposed to it. We talked for probably an hour, and he finally said, “All right, I willnot stand in your way. If you really want to do this, I will let you do it without objection.”

I went back to the Department of State, the telegram asking for the agreement for my assignment in Cairo went out, and several hours—two or three hours—went by. Then I had a frantic call from George Ball's office, saying, “Come upstairs immediately.” And Senator Fulbright apparently on reflection over lunch had gone back to his original view that he held when I walked in the office that morning, that he did not want me to go. He said that I was not—he had called George Ball and he had called Dean Rusk—and said to both of them that he was very much opposed to my being moved out of Educational and Cultural Affairs, and he simply would not permit it.

There followed nine weeks in which the question of what I was going to do next was caught up between the President of the United States and the Chairman Of the Foreign Relations Committee. Bill Fulbright, with whom I talked almost daily at that point, kept saying that he would accept as a replacement for me anyone that I told him was up to the job. I kept saying to Senator Fulbright, “I have nothing to do with making an appointment as Assistant Secretary of State; this is a prerogative of the President of the United States, and I have no claim whatever to make an appointment.”

He said, “If you don't work out the name, if you don't tell me that he's up to doing the job, I will not permit you to go to Cairo; and I am very much opposed to your departure.”

As these little ironies of fate happen, as it worked out, we happened to run into Bill and Betty Fulbright, it seemed to me, almost every night during those several weeks.

Q: That always happens when you're involved in something like this.

BATTLE: It did then. And Betty Fulbright kept saying to me, “Bill isn't going to let you go anywhere; he wants you to stay here and run the Educational and Cultural program.” And I kept saying to her, “It's not my prerogative to decide; it's that of the President of the United States; I'm a career foreign service officer, and I do what I am told. Therefore, I cannot do anything at all except what the President wishes me to do. I didn't ask to be Ambassador to Cairo, or for that matter, anything else; but if the President wishes me to do so I must do it.”

Well, this went on and on. I made up endless lists of people to replace me and would call Bill and say to Bill Fulbright, “I have no power whatever to make an appointment as Assistant Secretary of State; but how would you feel about these names if the President should select them?” being very careful to assure him that I couldn't say who was to be my replacement. In every instance he said, no, he wasn't interested in that fellow; he didn't like that name, or he never had cared for that fellow, or whatever.

More and more the press began to learn of this. I was very worried because I could see a column coming out saying “President and Chairman At Odds”; and an argument in which certainly I would have been the loser, and I felt everybody would lose.

Q: This was early enough too, that the President and Senator Fulbright had not had their difficulties.

BATTLE: There had been no difficulties. This was before Vietnam became a problem, before the Dominican Republic became an issue. And I simply did not want to get in the middle of that particular thing, and all I had in mind was straightening it out and trying to make it acceptable to both people.

I must say Senator Fulbright told several members of the press, and I had calls. Fortunately the ones he told happened to be personal friends of mine. Joe Kraft and Bill White, Sidney Hyman, and one or two others, and later I learned Walter Lippmann and others had known of it too—but those three particularly called me and said that they had heard I was going to be Ambassador to Egypt; and I said, “Please, please don't print that.” They all knew what was going on, and I must say it's one of the few times in my life I ever managed to keep the press from writing something that I knew that would not be helpful to anybody.

So there were no columns, there were no stories, and it managed to hold for nine weeks. In the latter part of that period I had enlisted the help of a couple of friends of mine, George Ball and Ben Read, who is now Executive Secretary of the Department, in the job that I held earlier. And Ben Read came up with the name of Harry McPherson. And he said, “Harry McPherson is a friend of Fulbright's and he's a friend of the President's.”

Q: Was McPherson serving as a staff member for Mr. Johnson then?

BATTLE: No, he was not. He was in the Department of the Army; he was Assistant to the Secretary of the Army, or Assistant Under Secretary—he had a strange title, I remember, but I don't recall exactly what it was.

Well, I got in touch with Harry, and Harry obviously was extremely well qualified for the job, was someone who could get along with both the President and Mr. Fulbright, and seemed to me to be absolutely ideal. I called the Senator, and the Senator said that would be great, he thought that would be fine. And for the first time I could see the light of day.

Harry, at that point, told me that he was deeply interested in the job, and he did very well in the short period that he had it; he did superbly well. He would have been great if events had not removed him from that particular assignment. He said he was a little worried that the President might pull him over to be a member of the White House staff ,but that he would be interested in the job; and he talked with the President, the President said he was quite willing for him to take it, and it looked as though we were home free.

And in the ninth week, or tenth week, of this particular—what was for me an ordeal, because I was very much afraid it was going to pop out in the press and be a really embarrassing thing for the Secretary, for the President, for the Chairman. At the end of that very lengthy period, we finally got it settled and I went to Egypt.

I saw the President once or twice before I left although only briefly, no lengthy discussions. He was very warm and friendly to me. He had no particular awareness of me as a person at that point; I think he simply knew my name, and he knew I had many friends around the Administration, and around the White House staff, both old and new. But I had no relationship with him that I could in any way call personal at that point.

I went to Cairo. While I was in Cairo I had immediately several rather devastating experiences. I arrived in September and presented my credentials in mid-September of 1964; and then a series of little horrors occurred that caused considerable difficulty.

The American Library was burned down on Thanksgiving Day of 1964.

Q: That was some greeting—

BATTLE: A great greeting, I had just arrived. An American plane, a private plane belonging to John Mecom of Texas, was shot down on December 18, if I remember correctly. President Nasser told me and then later said publicly, that he was aiding the Congo rebels at a time when we were lifting our people out of there, causing great, great consternation here in the United States and elsewhere around the world—that really was the factor that led to the burning of the library a little bit earlier. But the issue was still very, very hot, and he said he was providing arms to the Congo rebels. On the 23rd of December President Nasser made the rather famous speech in which he attacked me personally and asked the United States if it didn't like what he was doing, to drink the water of the sea. This was one of the more famous of many anti-American speeches he made.

The events that led up to that, I think, are of some interest, because I think they indicate something of the moment and something of the kinds of pressures internationally. I'm coming back to President Johnson—

Q: That's all right. Actually we are interested in the life and times, and we're interested in your career there and elsewhere.

BATTLE: Well, if you recall, Khrushchev fell in the fall, I don't recall the date—the fall of that year. And there was a document that circulated around Western Europe saying that one of the reasons for his fall had been his relationships with Nasser and the fact that he had done several things that the Russians considered contrary, or at least not covered, by his mandate. He had provided aid beyond the level that was permitted; he had given honors to Egyptians, including Nasser, without approval of the Presidium; there were, I think, three out of several items listed as the reason for the fall of Khrushchev. Khrushchev and Nasser had developed a very strong and very personal relationship. I

think, from my talks with Nasser later, this had been a rather meaningful thing as far as he was concerned; and the general consensus both of Sovietologists and the Department of State and those of us who were engaged in the Middle East all indicated, I think, that this was a very important factor in Nasser's life. They were heavily dependent on the Russians for arms, for aid, in the Aswan Dam, for political support, et cetera, although he was trying very hard at that period to keep a nonaligned policy and not to be totally committed to either East or West, even though he bit by bit by bit even then and much more later was becoming committed to the East in a variety of ways.

Well, at the time, as I said on December 18, this American plane was shot down. The bodies of what we thought at first were two Americans stayed on the ground for two or three days; a representative of John Mecom came to Cairo, a lawyer and others; the widow of one of the pilots. It developed that one pilot was American and the other was Swedish, but we thought in the beginning they were both Americans. She arrived, and she was threatening to commit suicide. She was in a hotel room—we had to keep one Embassy wife with her around the clock; and the American Embassy could not get through to any official of the Egyptian government to even arrange to have the bodies moved or even to become in contact with them.

Unexpectedly, there had been a heavy rainstorm which happens very rarely in that area; and there was mud all around the area where the plane had been shot down—very hard to get to; and we had great difficulty even later in getting to the place. In the middle of this, I was summoned over to talk with Dr. Ramsey Stino, who was the Deputy Prime Minister for Supply; and he called me to come over to discuss increasing the U.S. wheat aid under PL 480 before the end of the year. Because there was a new regulation that went into effect that required the payment for the transportation of wheat in dollars if any additional arrangements were made for the supply of wheat after the first of the year. And he wanted to work out an arrangement for us to increase the aid and before the end of the year in order to permit him to save the dollar cost of shipping; in other words he had to pay in dollars rather than in pounds. Well obviously this was an extremely bad

moment. The library-'the ashes were barely cold—and one American body—we thought two at the time—was on the ground, and he summoned me over for what was a very brief and very unpleasant meeting in which I said in effect, “I will not discuss this under the circumstances that exist today.” This was December 18.

On December 23, President Nasser made the famous speech I referred to a moment ago with [Alexander N.] Shelepin who had come down from Moscow and was the first senior Russian to visit the UAR since the fall of Khrushchev. This was a great concern in the government about the relationships between Nasser and the Russians; they felt they had an opportunity, I can only say this based on my interpretations—it's not an absolutely established fact—but it was obvious that they had a fairly deep concern about reestablishing the relationship that they feared had been ruptured by the fall of Khrushchev, particularly when relations with the UAR were one factor in that demise. The fact that Shelepin Was there, that I had had this conversation with Dr. Stino which was reported to the President—this I do know. He was told by Aly Sabry, who was then the Prime Minister of Egypt and one of the most leftward of all the group in the group—probably a Communist, but that is not completely clearly established, but certainly very pro-Russian—that I had called on Dr. Stino and had threatened to cut off all American aid. I had not done that. I simply said I would not discuss this proposed increase that they wanted by the end of the year; I would not discuss it at all under those circumstances. He reported this, that I had been both arrogant and that I had threatened to cut off all aid because I did not like their behavior on the library and the plane incidents, I had made it very clear I did not like their behavior. I may have been arrogant, I do not know. Certainly I was firm. But I had no intention whatsoever of going over and discussing it—it would have been an impossible situation for this to become public knowledge and in the face of those two affronts to our country that I sat there calmly and discussed increasing aid with that government within two weeks.

The result was the speech and then immediately after a very, very strained relation between the United States and the UAR. I sent off the message that evening after

President Nasser's speech to Washington, saying that I did not feel that anything that we had done warranted the kind of statements that had been made; I strongly urged that we do nothing at all for the next days—that it really was their turn to come to us; that they would come to us; and that under no circumstances should we make any overtures to the UAR at that time.

Incidentally, I had an appointment with Nasser at the moment that the plane was shot down, although I didn't know it and I don't think he knew it. But it occurred while I was in his office. I did not know it for several hours.

Q: The shooting—?

BATTLE: The shooting of the John Mecom plane.

Q: Was that just a mistake of circumstance—was there anything involved there?

BATTLE: I don't know that we'll ever know exactly what happened. This plane had been going between Amman in Jordan and Benghazi in Libya. It had made several trips; they were moving detergents which in some way that I don't understand had to do with the drilling process; and they had been flying back and forth. They did have, I think, a new pilot on that particular run, as I remember it. There were several aspects of it that I could understand were confusing to the Egyptians, and this was clearly established. It was a comedy of errors also. The plane filed to depart from Amman, and then something went wrong with the landing gear, and they came back down to have it repaired. The control station at Amman, probably not very efficient at best, assumed that they had canceled the flight plan; and they sent out a message saying the flight plan had been canceled. The landing gear was repaired, and they then took off and headed toward Benghazi, coming over Egyptian soil. The Egyptian tower had received word that the flight had been canceled, and an unidentified plane, from their point of view, came into the air. It was one of the old flying boxcars of World War II, a plane that had been used by the Israelis for reconnaissance purposes; they thought it was that. Unfortunately again, the voice

radio went out when they were just a few miles from the Cairo tower, and there was no communication, effectively—it came and went—between the airport and the plane. If I recall, the plane could hear but they couldn't send. The plane was ordered to land, and the Egyptians sent up interceptors, and the plane was ordered to land, the plane came down and within a few feat of the ground the interceptor pilots departed. And the plane apparently was about to land then for reasons that are unclear to anybody, the plane went back up into the air, and the Egyptian planes came and shot it down.

Q: It apparently was not, at least, a premeditated anti-American act?

BATTLE: No, it could not have been premeditated. In fact, the attitude that I had that the Egyptians had been totally wrong, was not borne out at all by the FAA man when he came out and went over all facts and heard all tapes. The Egyptians finally, as is so often the case, were cooperative after it was too late to be cooperative, and helpful.

Q: After the damage was done—

BATTLE: After the damage was done, they delivered their tape recordings and all that, and it seemed fairly clear that there had been certainly errors on both sides. I don't think anything justifies shooting down an unarmed civilian plane, but it was not all black or white either way, and yet an enormous damage was done and great problems created in terms of relations between the UAR and the United States at that particular time.

We went then through a period of enormous strain. We had a remainder of a three-year agreement on PL 480 wheat and all of that wheat was suspended and held up for quite a long time. We had to release it prior to June of the following year, June 30 of the following year, which we ended up doing. I tried very hard at that period to get the Egyptians to have some sense of the realities of American politics back here.

Q: This aid was suspended now by orders from the State Department?

BATTLE: Yes, but what actually happened was, and this was I think unfortunate, but after the burning of the library after the plane was shot down—there had been a release by the Department of Agriculture of the next increment of the agreement. I would have opposed it; I was not consulted on it. I would not have felt that there was at that stage any wisdom whatsoever in releasing wheat, given that difficult situation; and that at a minimum there should be a pause in which the whole situation could be reassessed. But that there was a release in the face of the burning and the plane created a wild flurry of reaction back here. This may even have come after the speech, I'm not sure; I think as a matter of fact it did. It did. It was after the speech.

Q: You say wild flurries; are you talking about political opposition?

BATTLE: Yes, political opposition here in the Congress and thereby creating a very difficult problem for the President and a series of speeches—of tirades—at Nasser, understandably and justifiably. I might state here what my own views were on the question of relations between the United States and the UAR and we'll come back to this particular point where we are.

The problems between our two countries were numerous and complex. One of the key ones is that we had never been able to make up our mind exactly what we wanted our relations with Nasser to be; and we had gone through very violent swings of either approval or disapproval, when in my opinion what would have been a much more reasonable course, and it may not have worked, but a more understandable, justifiable and defensible course, would have been somewhere in the middle between total opposition and total support. In the Dulles era, right after Nasser came in—immediately after—we greeted him with every possible sign of affection and warmth. We could not be more helpful; we tried to do everything that we could do.

We then went through the period of the Aswan Dam and in the 1956 era we switched totally the other way and were totally in opposition to him. At the beginning of the

Kennedy Administration, we went the other way. We signed a long-term three-year wheat agreement with Nasser, which was a mistake.

Q: Why was that? Because it was too much support, you mean?

BATTLE: It was, I think, too long a term of support. The way to aid Nasser, if you're going to aid Nasser, is short-term, with a short leash, with a constant—I recommended from the very beginning that our policy toward Nasser, if we were going to put in aid there, and I thought it was right that we should do so and I think it would have changed if we had been able to keep a more even keel in our relations with Nasser. It might have had a major effect on the history of the Arab-Israeli war that later occurred. But we had dealt with him in extreme—extreme of approval or disapproval. I felt that we should not deal with him in extremes, that somewhere in the middle was right, that we ought to follow what I described as a doctrine of continuous negotiation with him, in which all aid was on the short-term and he was reminded day-by-day of the importance of relationships with us and that we should never sign our name on something that committed us for several years into the future without any obligation on his part, particularly in view of Nasser's rather total lack of understanding of the nature of our society. He simply does not understand what a democracy is all about; he doesn't believe it.I used to take him books all the time—not every time, but frequently I would take him books—and he read actively and seemed to enjoy them, and we would discuss them. I took him books written about the Kennedy Administration; I took him Sorensen's book; I took him Schlesinger's book; I took him several things. A couple of times I said to him, “Mr. President, this one doesn't deal very kindly with you, but I think the book will interest you even though it is critical.”

But he simply didn't understand what was involved in operating a society such as that of the United States. When I went out there, as I have said many times, we were over committed, not in terms of our international considerations, but in terms of our domestic considerations. The Kennedy era had signed a three-year agreement with Nasser in a period of relative tranquility and relative calm between the U. S. and the UAR for a lot of

reasons of which our relationships were one factor but only one. We had overextended ourselves in terms of our ability to back up a bad policy domestically here, if there were any incidents or any challenge to that policy.

Those challenges came right after I arrived through the burning of the library, the shooting down of the plane, the Congo—those were the big three issues. Those then became the arms of those critics of the policy, and we were therefore totally exposed with a long-term commitment against the effrontery of Nasser and against his actions, and we had no recourse at all, and there were no obligations on him, and we were put in a very difficult position. A much sounder policy, in my judgment, was a shorter-term arrangement which we dealt with him, reminding him without putting conditions on aid, but letting the time period of that aid be the condition itself. We would, I think, have reminded him of the importance of a continuing relationship with him, and we might at least have forced him, for his own reasons, to pay a bit more attention to what our own sensitivities require than he ever did under the circumstances that existed when I was there.

This is a policy that I deeply regret we never got into full force and effect; there was no dissent from that policy. Everybody agreed to it, but the problems domestically here were so great and the problems that President Johnson had in managing the Congress in other fields that limited his ability to act with respect to the Middle East never made that policy that I thought was right possible. And to add to this Nasser did not help us at all; he continued to make unfortunate speeches. I could quiet him down for a time, and he would behave himself very well for a few months; and then all of a sudden he would go into a tirade. We had a period of almost a year—I guess it was over a year—during which we had very little difficulty. He gave us a new building for the library, he stopped aiding the Congo rebels, the tone of his speeches calmed down considerably, there was some progress but not much toward a settlement of the Yemen crisis. And there was at that stage very real quiet on the Arab-Israeli front.

Q: How much was that affected by his political situation? When he's quiet like that, is it because he's safe at home?

BATTLE: Yes, but not entirely. I could never really—this is a question that has no total answer. I told him once that I had trouble understanding the reasons for his speeches. I said, “There are times when I understand why you say what you do because I see an internal problem or an area problem for you,” but I said, “Most of the time I don't understand at all.”

And he said an interesting thing to me. He said, “One reason is that I read your Congressional Record.” And he said, “One of the Congressmen makes a speech attacking me,” he said, “I have to answer back.”

And I said, “Mr. President, you must understand that you're the President of a large and important country, and the idea that you must answer an obscure Congressman, perhaps little known even in our country”—

Q: I was going to say, if he reads the Congressional Record, it's probably better than most Americans do.

BATTLE: But in that case worse; because we would have been better off if he hadn't read it. And I said, “If you ever had here a speech by President Johnson, or Secretary Rusk, or Vice President Humphrey, you answer it—you clobber them.” I said, “I understand that, I won't argue with you, you won't have any problem with me if you do that.” But I said, “You're not going to have that kind of speech.”

I said, “But when you, a President, answer an unknown member of the Congress, build up his speech, make it public news when it wasn't news before and was little noted and little known, you are not serving your interests and certainly not the interest of the United States and the UAR in a reasonable relationship between our two countries.”

He professed to understand it, but he couldn't contain himself. And he would read a speech by someone who had attacked him, and he felt he had to attack. Therefore, it could easily be that these answers, these speeches that he made, really stemmed from some small insult as he saw it, some small sense of effrontery from the United States—he's enormously sensitive.

Q: And something that the State Department couldn't control?

BATTLE: Something that no one could control. That is what I meant by not understanding a democracy. He couldn't believe, for example, and he said this to me several times, that President Johnson after the 1964 campaign when he had a huge, overwhelming majority of American public support and of the Congress, why there was any problem whatever—that President Johnson could do anything he wanted to do, anything. And he couldn't believe that there were limits on the President. He couldn't believe, for example, as I tried to explain to him, that the committee structure of the Congress was a great limiting factor, that a key committee chairmanship opposed to a bill having nothing to do with the UAR could well be a limiting factor in aid to the UAR because he was opposed to it. And this kind of consideration simply never got through President Nasser's mind.

I think we can look back with some regret on our relations with Nasser. Somehow I think it should have gone better—I'm speaking not now of my period because by the time I got there the die of the extreme was cast.

Q: And has since continued?

BATTLE: Oh yes, even more so. Ever more so. But I think looking back many years ago when he first came into power in 1952 and the period after that, what he really wanted in the beginning period was not at all inconsistent with American interests and his basic goal for the people, at least as stated by him, and at least as apparent by him—he had not fallen into the prey of the Russians, he was still speaking fairly moderately in terms of his

internal policy—somehow it should have gone a little better than it did. I think that if we had been able to acquaint him with the West, with the nature of the democratic society, with our country, that this might have been quite different. You realize that he has never visited the West, really. He visited France once for three days, and he came to the United Nations in New York the year that Khrushchev pounded the table with his shoe—which was that, 1961?

Q: 1961—it wasn't a good year.

BATTLE: It wasn't a good year at all. He came for about two days, three days maybe, and saw New York and then went home. But he never had a contact with a Western society and with a democracy. He read a good deal; he has a certain basic intelligence, he's not a stupid man. He's a limited man in terms of world experience or certainly in terms of his own educational experience, but he's not a stupid man. And his motivation initially was not too bad. As time went on, it became more and more incompatible with American interests, and we at alternate times tried to woo him and condemn him, and he was all too well aware of this. And I think a steady course in the middle might have, and I can only say might have, changed the course of things. We can never look back and say what might have been, but I would have liked seeing it tried on a longer term basis than the few months that I managed to get the policy through. It was never really fully through.

Q: And the next real crisis with the UAR, I suppose, came after you had returned here as Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. How did that appointment come about? Did Mr. Johnson take a direct role?

BATTLE: I don't know. I was put in a rather awkward position that summer. I came back here in the summer of 1966, on home leave. I had been out two years and I came back on home leave. I had received a massage, an oral message, by a friend of mine George McGhee.

Q: This was Ambassador-at-Large McGhee, I guess?

BATTLE: Yes. George and his family came and spent Easter with us in Egypt in the —I guess it was April of 1966—and he said that he had seen George Ball a few days before. And that George wanted to tell me that I was probably coming back to be Assistant Secretary in NEA. In fact it was more probably. He said would be coming back. I then began to get little letters, as one does in these circumstances, saying that it was highly probable. I had hoped that I would get orders to come back before I came back on home leave in July, as I remember, mid-July, for the simple reasons of problems of school, all these problems that one has to face with a family abroad. It would have been much simpler for me. I received no word other than these two or three intimations; I came back first to California where my wife's family lived, and the day I arrived there was a front-page story in the Washington Post with respect to the departure of George Ball, and Tom Mann had already gone, and Alex [U. Alexis] Johnson was going to be Ambassador to Japan; and that there were three top vacancies. And that day and for several days thereafter, the press was full of rumors that I would take one of those jobs. Scottie [James] Reston, for example, had a piece that Bill Bundy and I would take two of tile top three jobs, and then there began to be a flurry of rumors in all the columnists and the press that I was going to take one of those three, which would have been rather odd for a career person. It would have been, particularly, as young and junior in the service as I was.

But the press kept playing this up; I them came to Washington. By that time it was all over the city and all the press that I was going to be one or the other of these things. And I therefore had a feeling of utter confusion. I think the President had difficulty, and I was not here during most of that period, deciding who would be in each of these several slots.

I was told by George Ball and by Dean Rusk that the President had me in mind for one of the slots, meaning either the NEA job which was vacant or about to be vacant, the Congressional affairs job which was about to be vacant, the Deputy Under Secretary for Administration, or one of the two Under Secretaries. Dean said he thought the President

would want me to come to one or the other of them; this was the last day that I saw him before I went back to Cairo. I said, “Well, there is only One that I will not take, and that is the administrative one. I do not want to be Deputy Under Secretary for Administration. I've been offered that job twice—”

Q: This was the one Mr. [William] Crockett was leaving at that time?

BATTLE: Crockett was leaving at that time. I said, “That is the only one I will not take, so will you please tell the President, let me tell you I don't want that one.” And Dean laughed and said, “Well, we won't ask you to take that,” and he said, “But you may be asked to take one of the others.”

And I said, “If the President wishes me to do it, I will dit.” And I went on back to Cairo. Some weeks went by before anything happened on any of them. And then finally the appointments of [Nicholas D.]Katzenbach and [Eugene] Rostow. By that time I was enormously relieved that I had not been asked to take either one of those jobs, and then later on Foy Kohler for a year—he agreed to take that only for a year.

And then I got a telegram on January 30 [1967] asking me to take NEA, which I agreed to do. I left there March 5. By that time the relations between our two countries were very, very strained. President Nasser had on February 22—George Washington's birthday which was the way I remember it—had made another very vitriolic attack on the United States. He chose the day that President Johnson had authorized the Department of State to go to the Hill to consider a short-term extension of PL 480. He made that speech right in the middle of the consultations of that particular subject. I could see no internal need in Egypt for this kind of speech. It just seemed to me to be absolutely unnecessary. I told President Nasser that. I told him at my farewell call which was March 4—I said, Mr. President, I want you to remember one thing: that you gave up before I did. You wrote off any further relationship before I wrote it off—before the United States wrote it off.” I said,

“We were consulting on the Hill that day, and you knew that. I sent you a message to that effect.”

So while it's hard to understand what brought that on, it might have been some obscure speech somewhere that he read, it might have been just an uncontrollable, ungovernable problem that he has. When he's in front of an audience, Nasser becomes something that is quite different from what he is in private. It might have been a response to any one of those things; it might have been just Nasser.

I've been having some talks with a group of psychiatrists from the CIA, and we're trying to analyze the nature of Nasser and to try to—now this really shouldn't be on any record—I probably ought to leave it out. But I've been going over all the details of the many meetings that I had with him, trying to uncover indications of the nature of his difficulties.

Q: Sort of like historians who psychoanalyze characters of the past?

BATTLE: Yes, this is what we're doing. So I left there, oddly enough with an incredible sort of departure. Personally, my relations with the government, with the Egyptians, could not have been better by the time I left. After a very rough beginning—and the press was extremely kind to me on departure. At my farewell reception, I think I had twelve members of the Cabinet who came to my cocktail party—there were some very warm words in the press. Mohammed Heikal, who is President Nasser's closest friend and the editor of the leading paper in Cairo, wrote a very glowing column about me. One of the senior officials of the foreign office said, “To read what is being written and to hear the speeches that are made, one would think that the relations between the United States and the UAR had never been closer, and we know there is doom ahead,” and there was.

Q: You were replaced though. You were not the last ambassador?

BATTLE: I was replaced by Richard Nolte, although he never had a chance to present his credentials. And therefore I am at the moment the last official ambassador. He was

ambassador-designate and an ambassador who was confirmed by the U.S. Senate to the post. He never presented credentials, and therefore legally was never the ambassador. He was present, but he was never legally the ambassador.

Q: You got the same kind of baptism to being assistant secretary then that you had to being ambassador in the first place. You got back in March before June of 1967—

BATTLE: Well, the first problem I had was not the Arab-Israeli Situation; it was the Greek coup.

You mentioned that I came back to a baptism of fire in the beginning of the NEA period. That's quite accurate. I took office—I was actually confirmed and then sworn in a couple of days late. I was sworn in, as I remember, about the eighth or tenth of April, and the Greek coup occurred the first week I was in office. Shortly thereafter a crisis occurred in Yemen in which two Americans were accused of having blown up an ammunition dump with the resultant loss of several Yemeni lives, and a very strong likelihood that those two fellows were going to be put to death for this crime, which they did not commit—I know who did it and it's now clearly established as to the origin of it. It's fairly highly classified as to what happened, but I knew at the time that they were innocent.

And then, of course, we went in shortly thereafter to the period of the Arab-Israeli crisis and its aftermath.

First on the Greek coup. We were faced, I think, with a very difficult choice. It appeared to us at the time that if we gave public voice to opposition to the coup crowd that we could very easily stir up a civil war in Greece. The crowd that took office—seized office—was certainly not to our liking; they were a bunch of second-rate thugs, by any measure. Some at this point appeared to be more thug-like than others, but they were all thugs.

Q: That distinction among thugs is rather thin.

BATTLE: Very. Certainly no one in his right mind would have chosen this crowd to govern Greece. But Greece had been badly governed for some time before that, a very long time before that, and trouble was clearly coming. The charges were made immediately that we had brought about the coup, Which was quite wrong; that we had known about the coup. This too was wrong, although there were many rumors of coups that week in Athens, and there were many reports of a possible coup, and we had known of the existence of this plan—I've forgotten the name of the plan. It doesn't matter, but there was a plan that we had known existed. Oddly enough, we were criticized by some for having known about the coup, and we were criticized by others for not having known about the coup. So you can't win either way.

I remember testifying before one of the Senate committees on what happened in Greece, and one Senator said, 'You didn't know about the coup?" I said, "No, we did not know about the coup." While some heaved a sigh of relief, he went into a tirade because he felt the CIA once again had failed. So no matter what you do, it's wrong. But it seemed to me that our policy at that stage had to be a minimal one; that if we were totally opposed publicly to the coup, we would stimulate all sorts of uprisings, none of which could succeed —as long as the military totally supported the new leadership which it appeared to do at that time. It seemed to us to be the very likely course of the future that there would be a civil war. While there was no evidence of any Communist involvement in the coup activity, we felt that a civil war could easily create a situation with which the Communists could play to our detriment. Because of the close NATO relationship that we had with Greece and because of the importance of Greece and the very special tie we had had, it seemed to us then that to follow a course that was neither one of approval of the coup nor one of such disapproval as would engender military uprisings in opposition to it, there could be no legitimate expression of opposition—there could only be military opposition. This seemed to us to be the worst of all worlds and another civil war in Greece, we thought, would just be the ultimate in horrors at that particular moment. And we felt that we were better off

to try to keep all the pressure we could on the government to move toward a return to constitutional government, to a normal political life, parliamentary system, et cetera.

We suspended all major equipment going into Greece, planes, tanks, all those things—it was symbolic more than anything else. But we let small arms, resupply of equipment, and that sort of thing go on in. To some extent this was artificial; it was symbolism rather than being a practical expression, because if there was to be an uprising, the small arms were much more valuable than were the planes. But we felt that we had to evidence a disapproval, but we did not believe we wanted to so weaken the military machine that we had built up as part of NATO, by cutting off all spare parts and seeing a military structure into which we had invested vast millions, many millions of dollars, hundreds of millions of dollars, go down the drain because we happened at that particular time, on a short-term period, to have an attitude of disapproval of what went on in Greece.

Therefore we chose the middle course, made it very clear that we hoped that there would soon be a return to constitution and parliamentary processes, and that Greece would once again turn in the direction that it had somewhat more traditionally followed.

The notion that Greece is a stalwart democratic country is absolutely rot—

Q: It refers to the fifth century—

BATTLE: You can go back and read some superb speeches, but Greece has not traditionally been a very democratic country, and it has been more often ruled by people not unlike what is ruling it now than it has been ruled by true democracy. That it is called repeatedly the “cradle of democracy in our crest” was to have a very narrow view of history and not to have looked very deeply into what really had transpired in the past.

We were not notably successful in our policy. I think we caused a good deal of concern within Greece; there was a good deal of opposition here, but coming for the most part from

the very liberal members of the Congress and the Senate—Senator Joe Clark, Claiborne Pell, Congressman Don Fraser, a few people of that sort.

Q: These people were seeking stronger action against the leaders?

BATTLE: Right. They wanted strong action against the coup leaders; they felt we should cut off all aid and should make it clear we disapproved, etc. Now one of them asked me whether I could guarantee that there would be a civil war if we did this. I said, “I can't guarantee anything. I can't even guarantee that the policy we have followed, are following, is going to work; but I think the odds are very heavily in favor of creating an internal situation that will be more difficult for us, and more difficult for democracy if we don't follow it. It is better to take this middle course of trying to rebuild a situation that we don't like and don't condone at all but in which our own leverage is somewhat limited.”

This was perhaps too subtle for some of my friends on the Hill. But this was the range of the debate. There was not, however, any vast opposition or even for that matter any very great interest except in very limited terms.

The Yemen crisis that I referred to worked out fairly well. We managed to save our two men who were there; we got them out; we got all the Americans out; it was very close; it was a photo-finish, and one of the most nerve-racking experiences that I had, with the possible exception of the Cyprus crisis, which I will discuss in a moment.

Q: Political considerations don't play as much role apparently in the Yemen crisis.

BATTLE: Well, the Yemen [crisis] is of no great importance to people here in the states.

Q: People here just don't know it's there.

BATTLE: One fairly interesting sidelight on this. These two crises—Greece and Yemen —which ran somewhat concurrently—Andreas Papandreou, a Greek, ultra-liberal, former American, who had denounced his citizenship, who had taught in the American academic

world, was imprisoned for a time in Greece. We urged his release and finally, I think, had a very real effect on the Greek government's attitude. I think they later regretted it, but they did let him out.

I must have had several hundred telegrams, telephone calls, and letters from American academia primarily, about the imprisonment—the outrageous imprisonment—of Andreas Papandreou whose life was not really seriously threatened, but he was under arrest. I did not receive one letter about the two Americans who were imprisoned in Yemen at the same time, from anybody.

Q: These were American citizens.

BATTLE: These were American citizens who were totally innocent; who had done nothing whatever, and were caught up in a morass of international politics that they neither understood nor condoned nor had participated in. I thought it was a rather sad comment if all the members of academia who wrote me letters and said that it was a matter of high principle, we must do what we can to release Andreas Papandreou. I kept wanting one of them to say, “What about those two fellows in Yemen?”

Q: They might even not have known about the two.

BATTLE: Well, it was in the press. It got almost as much publicity as Andreas Papandreou's arrest received; but it's a rather sad commentary on our society, and a strange one, because the appeals on Andreas were all couched in the most high-minded of terms; and these two obscure fellows who could easily have been forgotten as far as the American public was concerned—those of us in the State Department who were deeply concerned took that case with equal if not even more seriousness than we took Andreas. We felt a greater responsibility for them as American citizens than we did for Andreas who was not a citizen and who had denounced his American citizenship, and had frequently been extremely critical of the United States government.

But it is a rather sad state of affairs that high principle applies in some cases but not in all cases.

But back to the mainstream of what we're talking about. The Yemen crisis was of no great importance in terms of the United States in a political sense; it was of some importance but not great importance. Therefore it received little attention and there was not nearly the congressional or public interest in it. It went on for a day or two, and then it faded from the front pages and found itself, if reported at all, in the back somewhere.

From the standpoint of saving the two boys in Yemen, this was good. Because the less attention it got, the less it became an issue, and it permitted the Yemen government to backtrack on it and the easier it was for them the less that was said here. Therefore, it was helpful in terms of getting the two fellows out. Again, by a queer quirk of fate, the extent to which Andreas was written about here, and it was the subject of wild screeches and screams and letters to the Greek government and to the United States government, so did it increase the difficulty of getting him sprung. We finally managed to spring him, but it had very little to do with the public outcry here, which really if anything hampered the effort rather than helped the effort.

This is a difficult thing to explain to the public; that governments are able to back down on matters that are less public and less controversial with a greater ease than they are on something that's on the front pages of every press.

We went, then, through the period of the Arab-Israeli war. For me that began really in mid-May and stretched over the period—well, it really never ended after that, as long as I was in the job as Assistant Secretary for the Near East and South Asian Affairs.

When I left Cairo I told my wife the last day we were there—she stayed on with the children for some weeks after I did to permit them to finish school, since we knew there would be no ambassador going for some little time, some weeks. I told her that I could

only see trouble ahead; that I was confident there was going to be a flailing out by the Egyptians in one direction or another. We had reported repeatedly to Washington that it would come in one of three ways; that if Nasser needed a diversion and something to cover his internal difficulty, that he could heat up the Yemen crisis with a view possibly toward undermining the Saudi Arabian situation in the hope of getting some of the oil money that existed there or in Kuwait. He could go the other way and try to undermine by subversive action the regime in Libya, also a very rich regime where he had a great many Egyptians who were functioning there as teachers ostensibly and in other ways; or, lastly he could heat up the Arab-Israeli situation.

At the time I left, the Yemen was hotter and it became hotter with the arrest of these two men and all the issues that came. It looked for a time as though that was the most likely course. It also had the attraction of having at the end of a rainbow a hope of money, not necessarily by a conquest, but by a contribution which actually happened after the Arab-Israeli war, and is still going on—the contributions made by the Saudis and the Kuwaitis to Nasser for a different set of reasons. But the Arab-Israeli one seemed to be more of a political diversion without any sort of economic gain that comes directly therefrom.

Q: He wouldn't consider it a disadvantage that it would draw the major powers in whereas the Yemeni one would not?

BATTLE: I don't think he ever intended it to draw—never thought it would get to the point of drawing the major powers in, at least into a conflict. I think he thought that if he was going to draw them in, he was going to draw them in ostensibly through the United Nations in a way that would pull apart the Arabs and the Israelis because he probably believed, and he was undoubtedly right in this, that the Russians and the Americans did not want to go to a full-scale war. I think this was clearly one of the lessons of the June 5th Six-day War. I think he began the venture in mid-May with a view toward a political diversion, with the hope of a political victory without loss to him, that would stop short of war. I think that's what he wanted. One can speculate as to many things, much of it is not 'clear, and I

think really the details of all this had better be left to something more precise than memory; because there is a history of all this period being prepared and based on documents and telegrams which will be much more exact than my own memory can possibly be.

But it was, I thought, fairly clear that what he sought, what he hoped for, was a cheap political victory without any major loss to him, that would restore his prestige in the area which would bring tribute and contributions from certainly the Arab world and perhaps both East and West, and put him back in the position where his influence and power would not be treated lightly. He had had a series of economic and political reverses; the Yemen had gone very badly; he couldn't find a way to extricate himself from it. He told me a couple of times that Yemen was his Vietnam, and it was indeed in many ways. I think he would have liked a way out of that conflict if he could have found a way that permitted a political face-saving, but alas he couldn't, or didn't, to be more accurate. And he needed something to restore the confidence of the Arab world in him as a winner, which he certainly gave no evidence of being at that particular time. But he, I think, did not intend that there be a full-scale war, certainly not the kind that transpired. But he thought he saw an opportunity for a cheap political victory in which he could heat up the situation without any real loss to himself.

The rest is history; anyone can ask questions about the way he blamed, the United States and the United Kingdom for engaging in attacks on him when he knew it was not true. There is a standard requirement in the Arab world to blame somebody else for whatever goes wrong; it's never your fault. This has to do again with a loss of face; it has to do with the sort of Messianic complex that Nasser has; he doesn't like to be proved wrong and can never admit to these wrongs; and in fact no Arab can ever admit without loss of face, that he has done anything that is wrong. This was part of the problem.

But he got in this and he couldn't turn back, and I think he became more and more drunk with the world attention he was getting, and more and more convinced that he could contain it, could control it, could prevent the war from occurring. If he had prevented the

war, if the war had not occurred, if he had prevented it, we had prevented it, if he had been given a free victory, I think the result from our point of view would have been even worse than what we have now. His own power in that part of the world would have been increased markedly; the tendency toward polarization within the area between East and West, between Arab and Israeli, would have been as great as today. And we would have found ourselves in a situation that would have been quite intolerable for everybody.

Q: So his concept from his point of view really wasn't bad?

BATTLE: Wasn't bad at all.

Q: He just lost control of it.

BATTLE: He just lost control of it. If he had managed to contain it, if he had not let himself —I think one thing—there are lots of facets of this. There was a phony intelligence, or wrong intelligence, fed by the Russians to the UAR, and to Syria and others; there are many things that are very difficult to understand. There are many facets of it; and I don't know that we will ever have a complete, total fix on it. I think one of the things that's hardest to understand, and I suspect was a key to his becoming over-involved and overextended, was his call for the withdrawal of the UNEF troops, the UN troops there. I do not believe he really expected that the troops would be pulled out as quickly or as easily, and he thought that this, when he asked for their withdrawal, instead of having it acquiesced in immediately, that he might have thought that this would be the point in which the world would call a halt.

Q: The UN got a lot of criticism here for acceding so rapidly. Why would they do that?

BATTLE: Well, I think they deserved that criticism. I think it was quite wrong; I think the Secretary General should not have acquiesced in this. Of course, it wasn't helped any by the Indians agreeing to withdrawal of theirs-

Q: The troops who were actually on the spot?

BATTLE: The troops that were on the spot. And once they said they were willing to pull back, and the Yugoslavs did the same thing, then it became very difficult for U Thant and he acquiesced immediately in the whole withdrawal. The Indians have always been mixed up about Nasser; this goes back primarily to the very intimate relationship between Nehru, Tito and Nasser; that was a very real force in the world of a few years ago, but is of no great importance today.

Q: It didn't last beyond Nehru's career?

BATTLE: It has lasted to a degree, but it's a little less directed. Mrs. Gandhi, I think, still looks with great warmth and affection on that relationship as she sees it, in terms of her father Nehru. Nasser was a friend of Nehru's, therefore he's a friend of hers.

Tito, I think, still has a very real concept of it, but Tito is older, perhaps a little wiser or less wise, depending on how you view his past. It's a different world. And Nasser's own impact in the situation has certainly lessened and it is very difficult to find a nonaligned world in the terms in which we knew it a few years ago. Therefore the triumvirate does not have the force and effect and impact that it had in years past, and it can't possibly have. It's a different world. But a certain vestige of this still goes on.

Q: That might have explained some of the Indians' quickness to get out.

BATTLE: I think it did.

Q: This is a crisis that was compact in time and is a pretty good case study, I expect, in what they call, by now a cliche, crisis management, what role does the President play in a situation like this, where you have a lot of things happening of tremendous importance in a short period of time? How does he relate to the situation?

BATTLE: Well, in this particular case the President followed it for a lot of reasons with extreme closeness. He read everything that came in, he was briefed a couple of times a day; I saw a good deal of him during that period. He had the National Security Council or a select group of members of that group, and I was frequently included in those meetings. This is all, I am sure, a matter of record at the White House. I couldn't tell you by days or when at this point. This particular case not only had a very important international implication, but a very important domestic one. He followed it very closely; he was very much on top of what was going on; he wanted to hear about it. I think we met every day for a time at six-thirty, if I remember correctly—every day, every night we met at six-thirty—and we brought him up to date. Dick Helms and various others came to this gathering; the Secretary of Defense, Buz [General Earle] Wheeler, and Dean Rusk, and I, or Nick Katzenbach or Gene Rostow and I, various combinations of us. But we four—I went most of the time, I'd say almost every day—and the others varied depending on what was going on. We had a meeting with the President for the first days. We went every afternoon at six-thirty, every evening at six-thirty; and Mac Bundy was brought back. I had worked very closely with Mac in the early part of the Kennedy era, when I was Executive Secretary of the Department and he was over at the White House. I have known Mac very well for a long period of time; from my point of view, I remember he said to me, “I hope you don't mind my presence here.” I said, “Mac, I don't mind it, I welcome it.” He was a great help; it was good to have him in the White House, following full-time what was going on, in this particular war and without the many duties that Walt [Rostow] had; Mac and I worked very closely together during that period, and he was a tower of strength.

Q: There was no difficulty of liaison between the State Department operation and the White House?

BATTLE: There might have been except for the sort of basic good will that existed between us. I think it could have been difficult. There have been times when it has been. But there was no problem at all. Mac and I talked every day, two or three times a day, and

I think there's always a tendency in moments of hot crisis that you find too many people trying to cook the stew. There was a bit of that in this one. In contrast to the Cyprus crisis which we'll talk about another time, where the interest in it was somewhat less and it was pretty much left to me, with the approval of the Secretary and Under Secretary and the President on the basic lines that we would follow. And that was potentially as hot a crisis as the Arab-Israeli war.

Q: Or worse.

BATTLE: Or worse. It could have been much worse. But there was, I thought, a much greater attention on the part of the top levels, partly reflecting the degree of interest in the Congress and the public and the directness of the Soviet threat in the Arab-Israeli situation, where it was a step removed in the Greek-Turkish one. But don't have any illusions that if Greece and Turkey had gone to war over Cyprus, it would have been the end of NATO and a very serious involvement by the Russians, and a very, very bloody mess in Europe.

Q: What about the pressures, the political pressures, when the Arab-Israeli controversy gets important? Are these important in actually determining what decisions, or what reactions, are made here?

BATTLE: Well, the pressures worked many ways. It was a very odd moment in history. I'm not the greatest living expert on many things, but I am the greatest living expert on one subject. On June 5, I was sent to the Congress by the President and the Secretary of State twice that day; once to brief the House Foreign Affairs Committee and once to brief tile Senate Foreign Relations Committee.The Senate Foreign Relations Committee invited all the Senate. Fifty-one members showed up, over half the Senate. It was a moment in which no one knew how the war was going. It was the first day, and very, very delicate. Nobody knew.

I got a message from the White House while I was testifying. It went on for several hours. It was one of the roughest hearings—I hadn't even been to bed—well, I had been to bed but just barely the preceding night. I was dead tired after two hearings, being up most of the night, and horribly harassed, with things being stuck in front of me all during the period of the hearings, to sign, or initial, or read, when I was trying to answer the questions. But there was a moment in which, it was a kind of a moment of truth in the sense that the Senate had to—the senators, individual senators—there were contradictory pressures on them that they in effect responded to by their questions. There were the doves on Vietnam who didn't want any involvement of U.S. troops anywhere in the world. But those doves on Vietnam were essentially the liberals, domestically, who were deeply committed to Israel and to Jewish groups in this country, who could see a conflict there. There were others who didn't give a damn about Israel in any emotional sense, who were simply worried about our commitments, and those cut across hawk-dove lines. There was a clear line of questioning by some such as [Jacob] Javits, who obviously deeply was committed publicly; others there was a mixture of horror and concern and uncertainty and so on.

The President asked me when I got back to the White House—I came back, walked into the middle of the NSC meeting which was going on. It was quite late; the hearing had gone on for several hours. My recollection is I went to the House Foreign Affairs at two o'clock and to the Senate Foreign Relations at four o'clock, and I finished about seven or seven-thirty, something like that. I went directly to the White House, and the first question the President asked was what I thought the Senate believed at that moment. And I said, “It's impossible to tell, Mr. President.” I said, “If I had to guess, I think you'd find them split about even between some kind of U.S. intervention and some have an attitude that is roughly 'don't get involved.'" I said, “I think very few would be with favor of the interjection of American military—of manpower—into this situation. Arms are another question. But in this is the very technical question for them as to the nature of our commitment—the nature of our obligation. What is it? Why are we in this situation where we don't know what we mean?”

Well, the truth of it is you are tied to the past and as is frequently the case, documents aren't defined, statements aren't defined with precision until there's a test of it. This is particularly true when the prime commitment here of an international and public character went back to 1950—

Q: To the Tri-Partite Declaration?

BATTLE: The Tri-Partite Declaration—the U.S., U.K., and France, in which the status of it was very much in doubt. It was then in a very different context; it had to do not with the guarantee of the Israeli borders, but the guarantee of the territorial integrity of all countries in the area. It was a very difficult thing to define.

Q: It has been used since, I think, to criticize our allowance of Israeli gains.

BATTLE: It has indeed. Many people, many countries in the area, believe that we have completely violated that commitment by not forcing, in their view, the Israelis to withdraw. It would have been a bit harder than they realized to achieve, but they have a point. And so these questions of interpretations, there is no way in which one can be certain. And of course I had no idea what the President's attitude would be in the event we suddenly found Israel was losing. How far would we go in?

Q: Did he ever make that clear?

BATTLE: He never had to make that decision. He might have made it clear to himself, but this is the prerogative of the President. It's not my prerogative, and there's no requirement for me to know. I could only assess the situation as I saw it, and until the President of the United States makes up his mind, he doesn't have to tell me what he's thinking. In fact, it would have been unwise for him to do so.

But again from a purely selfish viewpoint, not knowing puts you in a rather awkward position when you're testifying to fifty-one senators. So it was a rugged day. It was a

rugged day, and one I will long, long remember. I came across a note the other day from one senior senator who is a very good friend of mine and written to me in the middle of that thing, he said, “Luke, you're doing great,” and he had signed it and it had been handed to me in the middle of that hearing, which had gone on for hours.

Q: That kept you going?

BATTLE: Yes.

Q: This is probably a pretty good place to break this.

BATTLE: Why don't we stop now and let me know when you want to come back.

Continuation of interview: December 5, 1968

Q: At the end of the first tape, Mr. Battle, you had been discussing the Six-day War and the events leading up to it and thereafter generally. Before passing from that particular subject on to Cyprus, which I think you mentioned was the other crisis that you would like to talk about, there are a couple of things that seem a little incongruous. On television the other night, for example, a history professor at Georgetown, I think, named [Hasham] Sharabi, said that the Johnson Administration had been so ardently pro-Israel that we had driven the Arab bloc into the Soviet camp. Is that an accurate assessment of the Johnson Administration policy in that part of the world?

BATTLE: No, I don't think it is. I challenge almost every aspect of that statement. I don't think that the Arab world is yet in the Soviet camp. Soviet influence in the area has been increasing for quite a long time, but not all over the area. The Soviet influence is primarily in Algeria and in the United Arab Republic, in Syria, to a less extent in Yemen; they certainly have a vital interest in the area. They're also interested in Iraq. They have a vital interest in that part of the area of the world and have been trying to create and support radical regimes which would challenge the more moderate regimes which were closely tied

to the United States. Those regimes are Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan, Libya, others. There are a few—Sudan has been an area of contention between ourselves and the Soviet Union. I think the Soviets have gained there considerably, but to attribute all of the Soviet growth of influence, first to say that they have that part of the world in their camp is a gross overstatement. And to attribute the growth of Soviet influence in the area to this particular period is I think a misstatement of history. The Soviet influence really began, and became a very compelling force, in the Dulles era. In the key country, particularly the United Arab Republic, there were two or three key decisions of that period—one had to do with the Aswan Dam and the Dulles decision not to finance that dam, after the Egyptians considered, and most observers do consider, that a full commitment had been made to them that U.S. financing would be forthcoming.

That plus the refusal to supply military equipment to the UAR, both of these were rather key decisions in terms of the Soviet opportunity in that country and in the area. Now each of these issues, I'm not saying necessarily that Dulles was wrong on those two points—I think the question of supply of military equipment is a very difficult one indeed and would have been difficult in any measure. But we had at that time embraced rather strongly the new Nasser regime and at least they considered that an outgrowth of that friendship would be our willingness to supply—or to sell—military equipment to them. Perhaps a combination of grant and sale. I think that would have been a very difficult decision to make.

The Aswan Dam issue; I think one has to separate the question of what was done from how it was done. I think a very good argument can be made for U.S. financing of the Aswan Dam, but a comparable argument can be made against it. It's a very complicated issue. But I think no argument can be made for doing it the way we did it; to lead the Egyptians to believe that we would finance and then do what they considered a backtrack on a commitment made and in a manner that was in their rather sensitive minds an insult to their dignity—this had a devastating effect in the U.A.R. and continues to have it.

Now to get back to the point of your question. Without any question the events of June of 1967 tied us more closely, in part for real reasons, in part for artificial reasons, to the Israelis than we had been in the past. Now let us examine these reasons. One is that there was in all honesty an overwhelming sympathy both in the United States and throughout the world, particularly the Western world, for the Israelis and their position of sort of the underdog.

The other reason that I think there is a close look is the need for the Arabs always to blame someone other than themselves for their difficulties. That we had had a deterioration in relations with the U.A.R. and with other Arab countries is, I think, a fairly clearly established fact. Certainly it's true of the radical Arab countries, the ones that I mentioned, particularly the U.A.R. But the nature of the defeat that they suffered at the hands of Israel and the precarious political position that Nasser and others found themselves in necessitated them to blame someone other than themselves. And the immediate scapegoat of the United States and the United Kingdom was latched upon as the reason for their defeat. And Nasser's statement charging us with having been a participant in the war itself, or having bombed the Arab countries, killed their people and been a factor in their defeat certainly did not increase the affection that the American public had for Nasser and his regime, and I think added very greatly to the implication that we were very close to the Israelis. We had not obviously, as everyone knows, been involved in any way in the fighting itself and had done everything that we could—I know that President Johnson took a very active part in this—in the days leading up to the Six-day War, and had in fact tried with all his might to stop the war, prevent its occurrence.

Q: Were we prepared in that regard to convoy Israeli ships if necessary?

BATTLE: We never got to a firm decision on that point. There was a good deal of discussion as to how the issue of the Straits of Tiran should be faced. There were still several aspects under discussion: whether we convoyed a U.S. or ship of another nation through there, forced the blockade, convoyed an Israel ship. Exactly how this was to be

challenged was never precisely decided. We had been discussing with various maritime nations a declaration on the freedom of the straits and were working on a plan involving a challenge by several of the maritime countries of the Straits of Tiran. But exactly what form it would have taken, this was not decided and only the President could decide it; it had not reached him in a form and with recommendations from those directly involved as to what he should do. We were still in touch with the several other countries, and I might add not getting much support from other countries. The British initially were interested in both the declaration and in the maritime venture; but they, I think, began to be extremely nervous as to the consequences, and certainly other countries—the Dutch were very much for it, and there were one or two—

Q: Very much for taking some action?

BATTLE: For both the declaration and for doing something. But there was a very real hesitation on the part of some of the other countries. Even though their initial response had not been in opposition to these suggestions, it was pretty evident to me, although not everyone agreed, that we were going to have a very hard time in carrying world support along for such an action.

But that was still very much in suspension, and the President had not decided what would be done; perhaps he had in his own mind but he did not tell me and I think that he had not. This issue was very much an open one at the time the war began.

Q: And made academic by the actual fighting?

BATTLE: It was made academic by the actual fighting, and the matter was dropped and it was all over.

Q: What about the other charge which was opposite from the one I started with—you frequently read that the operational officers in the State Department had tended to be pro-Arab to a substantial degree?

BATTLE: Well, it depends on what you mean by pro-Arab. I think that the more frequent charge is that they're anti-Israeli. I think that there is no one—certainly in the bureau that I headed at this stage, or for some years—who has not felt that the United States was committed to support, certainly diplomatically and politically, the survival of Israel; and I don't think any of them would have believed or would believe now that this was not an essential role for us to play. The question of how far you go in support of them is an open question, and only the President can decide to what extent and under what circumstances we would come to support the Israelis in any military way or in any way involving manpower. That issue, fortunately, did not arise in the June war.

Most of this criticism goes back to the era of the 1940's when it was quite true that almost all Middle Eastern experts who looked at the question of our relations and our basic interests in the Arab world believed that the Israelis, or rather that the creation of Israel, would have a very detrimental effect on Western and U.S. relations with the Arab world. And that while the plight of the Jewish people around the world was an extremely unfortunate one, that the Arabs had certainly as much legal right as the Israelis to Palestine. The sad thing about this issue is, in my own humble opinion, that both sides have an almost unassailable moral and legal case. The validity of either case hinges on when you begin the discussion. If you go back far enough, you can make a very compelling case for the Israelis; it depends on when you start, and it's a case on which justice and injustice is clear on both sides, and there is no answer at this stage, in my judgment, except to accept the verdict of history and to support the continued existence of Israel. Now, this does not necessarily mean that this should involve us in any support from a military point of view nor with American manpower. That decision has to be made by the President of the United States and in the context of the situation that exists at the time when this issue comes to the front. Now, if we have another round of hostilities —I'm supposed to talk of history and not the future—but if we have another round of hostilities, serious hostilities in the Middle East, which at the moment appears quite likely, the President will have to decide in the light of the situation then existing whether he

believes that he should because of the threat of the Russians, or because of the Russian involvement on behalf of the Arabs, or what have you. He has to decide then how far we will go. We are not committed; we have no commitment to come to the military defense of the Israelis; we have a general commitment to the territorial integrity of all the countries in the area.

Q: Going back to 1950?

BATTLE: It goes back to 1950. The real beginning is 1950 with the Tri-Partite Declaration, which has been changed by events in history and certainly by the 1956 war. This had a very important bearing on it, but we have, over quite a number of presidents of each party, given a real assurance of our support to the Israelis for their continued survival. This is not interpretative nor is it spelled out in any document. And the question of how far we go and what we do is an open one to be decided by the President of the United States, God rest his soul, at such time as the issue comes forward. I don't know who will be President when we next face the issue, but we'll hear it again.

Q: It looks like maybe soon, too.

BATTLE: It may well be soon.

Q: When you left office this fall [1968], did you not travel to that area immediately on leaving office?

BATTLE: Yes, I went out to Cairo to the official opening of Abu Simbel. They had invited Dean Rusk, and the Secretary obviously couldn't go and shouldn't have gone. Then it was suggested that I come in his place. The President was quite interested in this. We felt that this was a chance that should be taken; that they should be tested. We did not know whether the Egyptians really had something to say or whether it was going to be a case in which I simply restated what has been said to them repeatedly, but we felt that it was worth taking a chance.

I tried here to keep the press from building up my trip out there, and I succeeded fairly well. There was very little mention of it. I had many calls, and I told them that there was nothing earth-shaking in that trip, and that it should not be played up asa major initiative by the United States.

Unfortunately, I was less well able to guide the press in the Arab world, and it was built up a great deal more out there than it was here. I was the first senior government official to go into the U.A.R. after the break in relations following the June 1967 war. There had been other people much more important, I might add, than I, but they were not in government and I was.

Q: This was before you actually had resigned then?

BATTLE: Yes. This, also, I think complicated it and to some extent lessened the success of the trip. We knew that I was resigning and retiring from the foreign service, and there was a great discussion as to whether this should be announced before I went out. I felt that it had to be announced for several reasons. One is that if I got out there and talked with them and then did not tell them at that time that I was resigning—I have a great many friends in that government—and I did not tell them, then they would feel that we had misled them. And that I had come out with the appearance of a continuing responsibility for relations in that area when in fact I had known at the time that I would be leaving. If I had gone out and told them while I was there, it would have leaked to the press out there and that would have been most embarrassing back here. That I had gone out and the appearance that I had misled people back here would have been fairly grave.

So it was my own view that we were better off not to withhold the fact that I was retiring and resigning, and that we ought to put this out, make it clear to all interested before I went out there. So it was done. I think there was a slight feeling that this had lessened the value of my trip; I don't think it needed to have done so. But there were those out there who perhaps thought so. Although I had had a message from Gamal Abdel Nasser that

he looked forward to seeing me while I was there, he canceled his tentative appointment with me the last afternoon I was there. This could have been for several reasons. I think the most likely reason was that I had talked with his foreign minister and his deputy prime minister, and a member of his staff who is roughly the equivalent of Walt Rostow, and with others. I had seen most of the senior people in the government. He knew by that time that contrary to the press buildup in the area I had not brought a big new plan, or my visit did not represent a major new initiative by the United States; and that he didn't feel that it was in his interest to see me with a degree of potential embarrassment in receiving both the former ambassador to Cairo and a senior governmental official at a time when they had no diplomatic relations.

The other thing that I think was entirely possible is that his health—he had been in Moscow for treatment and had only been back a few days and had just started seeing people again. The King of Jordan was in town at the same time, which also might have been a factor. He left the day that I was supposed to see Nasser. I suspect that, knowing Nasser, that if he had wanted to see me and he felt it to be in his interest to see me, he would have done so without regard to these other considerations. But these might well have been factors, and I suspect that he decided there was nothing big and new in what I was going to say, and he did not wish to take what he thought to be some political loss in the area from having received me when I was not bringing something that was really going to solve his problems. Like all Arabs he, as he needs to blame someone else when things go wrong, so does he look to someone else to direct his difficulties and to remove his problems. He hopes that a third party somehow can bail him out.

Q: So they didn't suggest anything either?

BATTLE: They didn't suggest anything. There was nothing new in the exchange; I had a very warm personal reception there, except that nothing happened. I didn't think anything would happen, but I thought it was worth the test. I thought that by going out that it at least gave an evidence that channels of communication could continue to be open, even though

we had no diplomatic relations and that we were still interested in them, for the person in the State Department in charge of that area to go out there. So I think it was a useful trip; it was not an earth-shaking one; it was about what I thought it would be and about what I told the press before I went here that it would do. I'm glad I went. I think the President was right in sending me out; and it was worth a try, but we had no great expectations for anything big or dramatic.

Q: Let's shift over to Cyprus. I think that's probably one of the least understood of all the major international crises that has affected the United States recently. Can you go into that a little bit, particularly what the President's actions and attitudes—

BATTLE: Yes. This was a rather astonishing crisis in a number of ways. For one thing it was a crisis for some days before it ever got in the newspapers. We were frantically disturbed in the State Department some days before this ever got in the press. I remember my wife going to a party at Joe Kraft's, the newspaper columnist, and there were any number of senior American journalists, if there is seniority among journalists, rather important columnists at the party. At the last minute I wasn't able to show, and she said that any number of them came up to her and asked, “Where is Luke?” And she said, “Well, he's working.” And nobody pursued it beyond that.

Now there was a big story there for them if any one of them ever thought to go a step beyond, but the assumption at that stage was that I was still involved with the Arab-Israeli crisis, but I was busily handling another one.

The Cyprus issue is an old one; it isn't a new one. It stems basically from the Turkish minority on the Island of Cyprus with the large Greek majority, something like four or five to one, with the argument over the role of the Turkish minority and the nature of the government and the extent to which the Turkish government protects the rights of that minority on the island. There were rights and wrongs on both sides. The Cyprus crisis got out of hand; it had been building up; it got out of hand over a series of incidents that

did not in and of themselves suggest that the problem was as great as it was, but which brought to a head a lot of frictions and strains that had existed for some time.

Suddenly we were faced with it; we had a very strained relationship with the Greeks. Following the coup, we had not had very satisfactory relationships with them. We had suspended the shipment of all major military assistance to them; and in fact, our relations were rather strained indeed.

With the Turks we enjoyed a very warm relationship. President [Cavdet] Sunay had just been here, had seen the President, and had a very good visit. I had been out there not too many months before. There had been a great deal of exchange back and forth between us, and our relations were quite cordial. With Cyprus there were always difficult relations for the obvious reasons. [Archbishop] Makarios [III] is not the easiest man in the world to have a normal and natural relationship with. So the crisis came at a rather difficult time. We first hoped that we could avoid a direct involvement and hoped to look to the United Nations and to NATO to take the lead and keep these two members of NATO from having a clash with consequences that could have been quite disastrous.

Q: We didn't have any preference between the United Nations and NATO?

BATTLE: Well, what we really wanted was somebody to solve it. The UN was already involved, but for a lot of complicated reasons the UN, we feared, would not take the kind of position that was necessary; and in the last analysis, neither the Greeks nor the Turks were willing to accept a UN role as a predominant one.

We tried, for example, to get other countries—the British and the Canadians—to join with us and they did in fact join and were very helpful in trying to approach the two countries and bring some sanity into the situation. I could not really recall all the steps—there was such a frantic few days that I can't recall all the steps involved in this, but I remember on one morning that I went upstairs to see Nick Katzenbach and Dean Rusk and I said, “I

think we've come to the point where we're going to have a war within the next forty-eight hours if we don't do something, and it is going to be devastating and very, very serious."

We decided then and it was recommended to the President that he dispatch someone out there; various suggestions were made, I can't remember all of them—they suggested McGeorge Bundy, some of us did; Cyrus Vance, me, and others. I suggested that I was not the person for it for a lot of reasons. I felt that we needed a figure outside of government, and that it ought to be someone with more stature than I had in a public sense, and that I was not the person. So my name was withdrawn from the memorandum that we were filing with the President; I don't recall who else specifically was on it, but I know Mac Bundy was and I know Cyrus Vance was. It was decided to send Cy. Cy had just left government, not retired, but just gone into private practice of law. He had already been brought back for one or two things and was obviously not looking for further government employment. But like the good soldier he is he agreed to go; he said that he didn't know a thing in the world about the Cyprus issues, and that we would have to do something about briefing. It was decided that I would go up to New York on the plane that was to take him to the area. And I met Cy in New York at the airport; we set on the plane for perhaps two hours, and I went over all the issues at that time, stuck a sheaf of papers in his hands. And for the next days, I can't tell you how many days—but quite a few—he went through the most incredible series of diplomatic negotiations that I guess I've ever witnessed. And I've witnessed quite a few in all these years.

He did one of the most remarkable jobs that I think has ever been done and without the role of Cy Vance, without any question there would have been a war between Greece and Turkey; and he managed, through the most incredible skill, to keep everybody from starting shooting at everybody else.

We had very certain intelligence on a couple of occasions that the Turks were about to move, somehow he always held them off and we got a little more time.

I must say in all immodesty that we did pretty well back here, too. The President and the Secretary and Nick Katzenbach all were kept informed, but the actual operation of the crisis was left pretty much to me and to Joe Sisco and to Arthur Goldberg. And we three, in effect, ran the crisis; and we took quite a beating, too, but not anything like what Cy Vance took.

But I remember the night before Thanksgiving, Joe Sisco and I and several of our colleagues—Stewart Rockwell was one of my people and a couple of those working for Joe Sisco—stayed up all night long and had a phone line open to Arthur Goldberg who sat all night with a phone on his shoulder and the three of us were talking back over teleconference with Cy Vance in Nicosia. And that went on all night. And we were there until I would say—the next day was Thanksgiving, as I remember it. Perhaps I'm wrong, maybe the next day wasn't Thanksgiving, but it was that weekend. And I remember getting home in the middle of the afternoon, it was the second day, and we had all been just sitting on the end of this phone with poor Cy, who had been bouncing around between Ankara and Athens and Nicosia. I can't tell you how many trips he made on that plane he left here on; but any number of them, and he got no sleep for days on end. He was having trouble with his back from the beginning, and he left here with sort of a metal seat that he had to sit in because of his back problem.

But few people in the world can say that they stopped a war, avoided a war. And I think Cyrus Vance can tell his grandchildren that he kept a war from occurring and maybe a war that would spread very easily and very quickly to one involving broad participation.

Q: He's back doing it again now. [The reference is to Vance as Deputy in the Paris talks on Vietnam.]

BATTLE: He's back doing it again. So I think the United States owes Cyrus Vance a very great deal indeed.

Q: What did the President do? Is there anything that he can do to put pressure directly on our NATO allied governments, Greece and Turkey, to keep them from acting precipitously?

BATTLE: Yes, and he addressed letters to them. But the fact that we had—you see, this same kind of issue had popped up several years before, and he had put such pressure on them then that it had adverse political implications in Turkey particularly. And we were very nervous about going too far, using the President's prestige and power too greatly, because we feared that it could boomerang and that we could easily find that we were blamed for everything that went wrong. Therefore we were a bit cautious. We recommended a more sparing use of the President's power and his name than had been the case in the 1964 issue. [interruption]

One of the interesting things about that period and there were many interesting aspects of it—looking back on it, it was one of the nicest crises I was ever involved in. It was nice for a lot of reasons, but it was successful. It was relatively short; it was bloodless, relatively bloodless; and it really, I think, awakened the awareness of both the Greeks and the Turks to what almost was, what almost happened, and led to the present time when there is considerable reason to believe that they will eventually solve the Cyprus problem.

Again an odd and rather revealing thing is that the Greek coup in a strange way made possible the avoidance of war for the simple reason that the coup was in control of the press; they could keep the press from inflaming the issue within Greece. They did not want this to be an internal issue because they already had enough problems, and they couldn't face another difficult one. The coup brought very few good things, almost none, but it did perhaps make it possible in this case for the wrong reasons to avoid a war. That they had control of the press, that they wished to improve their relations with the Turks, and that they didn't want an internal situation that was already chaotic over a new issue.

They already had enough troubles. This made the Greeks much more flexible, and this was a factor that was not to be underestimated.

Q: What about the alliance system that we had in the part of the world over which you had responsibility, CENTO? Is it even a reality, and if so what is its role in that part of the world?

BATTLE: Well, CENTO was never really a very effective instrument in my judgment. I think if we didn't have it, I wouldn't want to create it. But the fact that we had it has to be accepted and it would be a mistake to try to eliminate it. It has a limited utility, and it was built up to be something that it wasn't. It never had quite the meaning that the Dulles era attributed to it. It was, I think, oversold both here and there, not that it was sold very much here because very few people are even aware that it exists. But the CENTO—perhaps now it's a fairly useful device for exchanging of political views. It is not a major or even an important instrument of American policy, nor is it an important instrument of anybody else's policy with the possible exception of Iran. The Turks put some store by it, the Iranians put considerable store by it, the Pakistanis put no store by it, the British are bored by it, and we are too. The Paks would like to see it end, the Iranians and the Turks don't want it to end in varying degrees; the British feel about like we do about it.

Q: Could it become the basis of some kind of commitment in the same way that we argue that the Southeast Asian commitment comes from SEATO?

BATTLE: Not unless you stretch it awfully far, because we're not members.

Q: Right.

BATTLE: And I cannot believe that it could be taken as anything major in that regard. I doubt it.

Q: Is the Eisenhower Doctrine taken seriously?

BATTLE: Well, the Eisenhower Doctrine really was a momentary, short-termed thing without really any long—there was no time framework for it. Oddly enough, it was almost never mentioned during the Arab-Israeli War. It was mentioned in an historical context but never in any context that suggested it had any particular validity with respect to the policy in the current sense.

Q: What about the actions of the United States in Vietnam? It's often argued that they have had very unfortunate influences on our relations around the rest of the world. Is that true of the Middle East?

BATTLE: Yes, it's true, but not as true as people try to make it. I don't know that we would have done anything very differently, if there had been no Vietnam. I think there might have been a slightly different attitude around about the U.S. involvement, but oddly enough all the doves in the Senate, particularly, who scream about commitments and the distinction of commitments, and who don't want them, are the liberal wing who are most pro-Israeli of any group in the Senate—

Q: That's strange. Why is that—?

BATTLE: That's a strange inconsistency. Well, it happens to be that the liberal senators are those who have been most interested in Israel because it was a traditional, liberal point of view. A Zionist state was needed, and a Jewish homeland was accepted by most people of liberal persuasion. And they became the ones who were opposed the most to Vietnam, and yet they were the ones who would probably have been more ready than anyone to intervene in Israel if anybody had been. They never had to face the issue nor did we—the government—so I don't know how it would have come out. It was an interesting little contradiction.

Q: The New Republic asked for action on the same grounds they opposed it in Vietnam, I recall that.

BATTLE: Did they?

Q: Very clearly; and got called on it by some reader.

BATTLE: It's a strange phenomenon.

Q: What about India and Pakistan? You missed the war as far as being assistant secretary was concerned, but you came along in its aftermath. Is the Johnson Administration policy leading anywhere there other than holding the line?

BATTLE: Of the countries of my responsibility in the NEA I'm afraid India and Pakistan were somewhat neglected because of the many crisis I had in other parts of the area. As is so frequently the case with our country, we always tend to see things in blacks and whites when usually gray is the more predominant color if we look a little longer. We, I think, went too far in our reaction to the India-Pakistan war in cutting off economic and political aid to them. I think that this was the result of enormous concern in the Congress and in the public, over the horrors of our arming two sides of conflict. Very bad it is, and I don't subscribe to it; but it's one of the realities of life that you can find yourself engaged in. The real problem on this goes back many years before, as is so frequently the case. You're chained to history. If you look throughout the era of NEA, you'll find many cases when we were arming a country against an enemy we saw, when they were arming themselves against an enemy they saw; and they very frequently were not the same enemy.

This was true in the case of the Arabs and the Israelis, and the case of the Greeks and the Turks, and the case of the Indians and the Pakistanis. But we had embarked on armaments programs never to the extent that—well, it depends again on which moment you look at it. We had at various times followed rather inconsistent policies over the years with respect to Indian armaments and were delighted when India began to rearm against the Chinese after 1962 as the Chinese invaded India; and we were delighted that Krishna Menon had been proved wrong and that his desire to keep the Indians from having any

effective arms policy was proved an error. Therefore, we were all for the army, but again we saw the enemy that they were arming against as China when they were quite willing to have a whack at Pakistan under the right circumstances.

So that's one facet of it. Another facet is that we had poured arms into Pakistan again against the enemy that we saw, the Russians, and against Communism in the area in an effort in the Dulles era to strengthen every country that was opposed to Communism, and we had shelled out much too much for arms aid to Pakistan. And once you begin this, it's very hard to turn back. You create an arms machine. And the resupply of it becomes essential, and if you don't resupply it, if they're determined to have it—and particularly when you've talked them into it—it's rather difficult to then tell them it's a bad idea. If you cut off all your resupply and spare parts or what have you, what happens? Two or three courses are possible. One is they can buy them in the open market of the world. We're not the only supplier of arms, of even of American arms, in the world. They're all over the place. They can be bought in the black market everywhere for nine or ten times what we sell them for. That's one thing. And then that runs up the budget cost, that runs up the cost of the machine, and that runs into the problems with the Congress, who are upset about the arms budget level. But it's because we're not providing it and we created the machine initially, and we're not keeping it going. And then they turn to the black market, or alternatively they turn to other suppliers in the case of the Russians. And the Russians are all too willing to supply in many instances around the world arms—Jordan is one of the key cases where this has been the case over the past year or two. They want to supply arms for political reasons, and we have a real problem if we cut off the supply of arms for a machine that we created and abdicate in favor of the Russians. We've got to be as a nation a bit more realistic about this than we have been. We need to recognize that many countries are going to arm, that we're better off supplying the arms, and that we can control the arms and the level of arms better if we supply than if we move out of it and let the Russians come in and do it, or if we let them buy in the open markets from other suppliers.

Q: This means it's hard to exact a price when we start again supplying aid after cutting it off, I assume, or makes it impossible?

BATTLE: It makes it very difficult and if you look at something in the case—. The first week I was in office in NEA, the first week—the first couple of weeks—we worked out a policy to resupply spares to both India and Pakistan on a limited basis and really didn't resolve the question of what we would do on items like tanks and planes, but let's look at what happened. If there's a tank brigade, and one tank is lost—destroyed, falls over a cliff, wears out or what have you—and you refuse to provide the tank, all right, the remainder of the tanks in that unit are of no value, and they either will start over entirely or you supply one tank. You'd be better off putting in one tank than you are in seeing them buying another kind of equipment. This is what happens.

We also agreed that we would supply, that we would authorize the sale from third countries a limited number of American tanks provided by us. What we didn't really anticipate was that we thought there were several countries that would like to supply them that nobody really wanted to. Nobody wanted to walk in, any more than we did, to the supply of tanks because they were permitted to sell without any real profit. And in the Indian-Pakistan context, the Paks wanted them, and every time they tried to negotiate with a third country for American tanks—Belgium, Turkey Iran—not Iran, because that was possible but for a lot of reasons it couldn't be. The Iranians would have done it, but the Turks and the Italians and the Belgians were all approached, and we thought one or the other of them would do it. Nobody wanted to, because the Indians came in and objected, and the tank sale in each instance didn't have enough money for the supplying country really to benefit from it materially, and the result was that the Paks became more and more indignant—I don't know where this question is now. I haven't had anything to do with it for two or three months since I've been gone; and I don't know where this is. But this is the problem of having these blanket decisions that you're not going to supply equipment. What really we ought to do is be realistic about it, recognize that there are frequently going to be

cases around the world where Countries are going to arm themselves; and the fact that we provide the arms is not necessarily the cause of the war. They're going to get the arms whether we provide them or not, and we're better off in the main in supplying them than we are in having others do it, not only from an economic point of view which is I think not an important factor in the importance of the terms that we're talking. But still a factor. But more importantly, I think we have to recognize that arms are available in the world market and that they're used by other countries, particularly the Russians and also the French, as a means of political influence and that the other countries are much less troubled than we over the ethics of the question. I don't like the situation in which we find ourselves arming both sides to a conflict, but I prefer to have us trying to do it on a limited basis than to abdicate and let somebody else throw them in wholesale, distort the economy and the budget problem, and result in a Russian arms structure that certainly will not be consistent with our interests in a great many of these countries. That's the nature of the problem.

Q: And still a problem, as you say.

BATTLE: And will be a problem for quite a long time.

Q: You mentioned the Greek coup. Did the Johnson Administration have a well-formulated policy toward this type of occurrence, or do they play it pretty much as an ad hoc thing?

BATTLE: Oh, I only had that one coup that occurred when I was in the NEA. I think we ad hoced it; it occurred the first week I was in office. I think we had enough signs that perhaps we could have anticipated that something—there were any number of rumors of coups and we knew of the existence of a coup plan. But that this coup would occur we did not know about in advance. We had, in looking back over it with the 20-20 vision of hindsight, perhaps we had tip-offs that this was coming that we didn't read accurately; even if we had known it, I'm not sure what we could have done about it. We could have made it clear we weren't going to back it. The colonels in Greece were surprised that we were opposed to them. It seemed to them that they were willing to do everything we wanted them to

do. They were pro-King; they were pro-NATO; they were pro-American; they were pro-Western; they were anti-Communist. As the colonels kept saying, 'What more do you want?" They were going to bring order, and they were going to supply the kind of policy decisions that they felt the United States wanted. That they had come into power through a non-constitutional means troubled us a great deal more than it troubled them. The notion that Greece is the cradle of democracy is just so much rot. It may be the birthplace of democracy, but democracy got out of there long before it reached puberty.

Q: And it's seldom been back since.

BATTLE: It's seldom been back, and the idea that Greece has been run as a democratic model over the years is just—those who say that just simply haven't read history. It has been a corrupt and in many ways unconstitutional, undemocratic government over a long period of time. So we tend to let, I think, emotion take over in these cases. I don't like that crowd in Greece, either. I think they're a second-rate bunch of thugs, but that is not the question. If we had let the emotionalism of a lot of our critics win, a number of things would have happened. If we had made public statements opposing the coup right after, we could easily have started a civil war in Greece. In the best judgment of all of us the colonels had control of the military, not entirely the navy, not entirely the air force; but they had enough of it—certainly they had the ground troops. They could have probably won out, but after a bloody civil war in which the Communists would have played around; and we could have easily started a civil war, and the consequences in Cyprus and Turkey would have been very serious indeed. And look what has happened in Czechoslovakia. We could have created a new situation in Europe and it was just sheer madness for us to do anything at all but to keep our relations cool but existent. And to try to use such leverage as we had to make the move to a restoration of parliamentary government and constitutional processes and a more democratic political life. It did not entirely succeed, but it succeeded in part; it worked less well than I thought it would, but it was still—even looking back I think we were right in what we did and to have followed any other course would have been really quite bad. It is a mess; there's no doubt of it. I don't like this regime, but they're better than

they were. They've got a long Way to go and even within the regime itself, there are many elements that are worse than those who are actually in control at the moment. Often these are not black and white situations.

I've got to put a long-time framework on the use of some of this.

Q: This is fine. As long as you want to.

BATTLE: I'm being awfully frank about it.

Q: Did the President ever take a specific stand on this problem of dealing with coups that we didn't like?

BATTLE: I never talked with the President generally about coups. I talked to him about this coup—the Greek coup—a couple of times; and I found him really quite balanced about it.

One of the fascinating things about this is the reaction of the academic world and the liberal community. I've always considered myself a liberal, too, but I find when I witness some of the things that the liberal community and the academic community have done and stood for over the last years, I find it absolutely appalling.

Now if you look at what happened in the case of the Greek coup, the week of the Greek coup—the aftermath of the Greek coup—Andreas Papandreou, a one-time American citizen and a member of the academic world here, was imprisoned. That was bad. We did everything—had a large hand in getting him out. I sent messages of many characters to the Greeks urging that they release him.

At the same time two Americans in Yemen were arrested by the Yemenis for having blown up an ammunition dump—charged with having blown up an ammunition dump with the resultant loss of several Yemeni lives, I've forgotten how many. These two fellows were able to be tried; they had not been involved in any way, shape or form. We knew who had been—we didn't know at the time it occurred, but we found out later. I don't think I will put

that even on this tape. But we knew they were innocent. This had, for a few days, some publicity in the American press. Andreas Papandreou had more, but there wasn't any great difference.

I had literally hundreds of calls from the academic world asking us to do everything in the world but start a war with Greece to get Andreas Papandreou out. I did not have a single call or a single telegram or a single letter about the two Americans in Yemen who were in much more dire straits and could easily have been forgotten, except for those of us in the State Department—the public forgot it, the public paid no attention. Those two were absolutely innocent, were official Americans, and were still Americans. Andreas has had a very complicated background and had renounced his citizenship and his life was not in danger.

Q: And had been involved in what they said he had—

BATTLE: And had been involved in all kinds of things in Greece, and historians were probably the reason as much as any other one factor that led to the coup. But the academic world and all my buddies—I had been very closely involved with the academic world off and on for a good many years—the academic world flooded us with telegrams, with letters, with phone calls; but not one person—. If you want to get on a matter of high principle, I would have thought if they're pleading for human life that somebody would have said something about the Yemenis. I made this point in two or three speeches. They were off the record. I wouldn't have made them on the record. I said it to a couple of academic groups. And even after that I don't think I ever got a letter about it.

We finally got them released; actually making it a public issue would not have helped. It wasn't that I wanted—to make it a public issue but—in fact I didn't want either one of them to be a public issue, because our chances of helping Andreas Papandreou, which we wanted to do and tried to do everything we could to help him and succeeded. We

succeeded in both cases. But neither case was helped by public outcry here; it made it more difficult for that government to do anything about it, to respond to pressure.

But the interesting thing is that it's just a matter of ethics. If you're going to stand on high principle, it ought to be a consistent one.

Q: It's trying to explain the difference between Vietnam and Israel—

BATTLE: Exactly, same sort of point.

Q: What about the kind of advice that Mr. Johnson has sought and gotten on foreign policy matters? Has he relied to your knowledge on the people who have held foreign policy posts primarily, or has he gone outside? Particularly, you're a very close friend of Mr. Acheson's, for example, as indicated by the photograph here and you said so last time. Has he used Mr. Acheson?

BATTLE: Yes, on numerous occasions in my presence. He had Clark Clifford, Abe Fortas, Dean Acheson, Mac Bundy, particularly were present on several occasions. He brought in any number—George Ball, who was out of government at that time. All those were brought in. I saw nothing whatever wrong with it. They were all used as an additional source of advice and thoughts. I must say, in all candor, that I can't speak for the relations between the President and the other assistant secretaries of state, but my own relationships with him were excellent. He made it very clear to me on numerous occasions that he wanted my views. People called me, and it would come on occasion—I remember once Bob McNamara got me out of a speech in New York—I guess it was just before I walked on the platform, and said, “The President wants me to talk with you personally about this issue and what do you think about whatever the point was?” I don't recall.

There were other times when he asked me. There were times when Walt Rostow called and said, “The President asked me particularly to get your views on this.” Now, when I had that kind of question I always gave my views; and then I, being an orderly creature—and

an old experienced hand around town—I saw to it that the Secretary of State, who was also my old friend and was my boss, knew that I had received such a call and what I had said. If he wished to advise to the contrary, that was up to him. But I didn't make a habit of advising the President without letting the Secretary know it, and while this didn't happen often, don't misunderstand me, it only happened a few times, but it did happen.

And I went many times to NSC meetings, to Cabinet meetings, to meetings of the control group, as we called it, in the Arab-Israeli period. The President was there and even though the Secretary or the Under Secretary spoke, he would nearly always turn to me and say, “Luke, do you want to make any comment on it?”

Q: So any charge that his source of advice was all one-sided is not in your experience valid?

BATTLE: Absolutely. My own experience is diametrically opposed; and I can truly say that I felt at home with him, and I had no hesitation in speaking up with him.

I was present at the ranch when [Levi] Eshkol of Israel was there; the President talked with me and in fact I recall Dean Rusk saying on a couple of issues, “Well, Luke knows more about this; he has been working with it more directly than I have; see what he says.”

And I felt at no time that I was shut out of or not consulted—this does not mean that everything I wanted to do was done. It does not mean that the President always accepted my advice. But I felt I had a chance to have it known, and I had no hesitation about talking. And I attended any number of sessions with the President and members of the Cabinet when I was the only non-Cabinet member there, with the exception of a couple of White House staff—Walt Rostow and perhaps others—something of that sort. But that happened on any number of occasions.

And on occasion I would go over. I went over on Cyprus and sat in on several things where the Secretary or the President would ask me to make the presentation. So I presented the issue, and we talked about the problem.

On a couple of occasions Joe Sisco and I went together; on other occasions Joe and I were there and Arthur Goldberg and others were there; it varied, but there were very few occasions—I used to tell Nick Katzenbach when we had these sessions, as we frequently did at the White House, on the question of how the President did not like to have too many people go. And I always said to Nick and to the Secretary, “I am not in the least sensitive about not going to things. It never bothers me at all; when anybody wants to hear I make my views known to those who are representing us, and I will accept it if that is what happens. I am not going to take offense if I am not included.”

Well, Nick is a remarkable fellow, and Nick would say, “Well, Luke, you know you know more about this than I do and I don't think I—if we have to choose between us, obviously you ought to go.”

So unlike most situations involving the President, where everybody is supposed to be clawing to get over there to be seen and to be known, I didn't feel that way at all. If the President wanted to know what I thought, he knew where to come and that was all there was to it.

But the only thing I am saying is that to a degree we sorted it out ourselves, and I don't think this was as true of some of the other assistant secretaries. They'll be doing this, and let them speak for themselves. But my own relations with President Johnson were very good; I had a very warm and deep affection for him and a great admiration for him. While I didn't always agree with him, he didn't always agree with me either. But still he listened and he retained and he read and he followed and I've seen him in some very remarkable performances in a diplomatic context.

Q: That was the other question I wanted to ask in that regard. What kind of a personal diplomat—you mentioned the visit with Eshkol—

BATTLE: His performance varied sometimes, but I've seen him on occasion when he was absolutely superb; he was excellent. In the efforts to stop the war, the June war, before it began and the talks that he had afterwards, he was I thought quite remarkable. And he had his own style, but it was a good, American, honest, sincere, direct presentation of a position, and I don't think anyone could expect any more. I think, as an American, I was always very proud of him; I had no feeling whatever, you know, that the criticisms of him and all that—I've seen a lot of him; he wasn't always the easiest man to work for, we all know that, but he had a genuine American—he may be the last Populist President we'll ever have. I don't know. But he had a genuine, earthy, honest, direct, and highly intelligent approach to things; and I found working with him, dealing with him, entirely satisfactory.

Q: I only have one other question, and it's a little bit irrelevant to President Johnson, but it's not irrelevant to foreign policy. Richard Rovere, several years ago, wrote an article about the Establishment— Eastern, Ivy League, Council of Foreign Relations and names do move in and out with facility; and you would certainly be among that group. Is there such a thing that might be called a capital "E" Establishment in foreign policy making?

BATTLE: I don't know.

Q: You mean you don't go to their club meetings?

BATTLE: I don't know. You asked me this, I must now be personal, and I didn't mean to be. I happened to be reading a book a couple of nights ago written by John Leocacos.

Q: Fires in the In Basket?

BATTLE: Yes. And he came to a description of me. He said, "Lucius D. Battle, an accepted Establishment figure, but one who is not stuffy about it."

Q: I just read the same book, and that's why I asked you the question.

BATTLE: Is that how you happened—?

Q: Yes, sir.

BATTLE: So when you say, “Is there an Establishment?” I don't know. I never would have considered myself an Establishment or an institutional figure in any way. I just never think about it in those terms. I think that there perhaps is an establishment of the intellect, an establishment that is based upon ability and integrity. And you soon, after you have as many years as I have on this particular track, you soon know where those are who both know how to get things done and have the brains and the courage, the guts, to try to lead and move in the directions that are going to be productive.

I think that is the establishment that I think ought to exist and comes nearer existing. Now it overlaps. I don't know whether it's Eastern Seaboard, Ivy League-

Q: I'm just wondering whether a Southwesterner could get in it.

BATTLE: Well, I would certainly think so. I'm a Southerner myself. I was amused by this reference that you were referring to. But I think that the old conception of the foreign service of the United States as being totally Ivy League, totally Eastern Seaboard, is really quite wrong. I have had a very strange career in the service; I have been in and out of it; and I've had a rather odd career. I was a two-time Wristonee, but I'm the only Wristonee who has ever been President of the Foreign Service Association. No one else has that particular distinction, and I had to fight like a steer to keep from being reelected. So all I'm saying is that it is possible for a renegade like me to be at home with the old guard of the foreign service, many of whom I consider my closest friends. And I don't know whether there is an Establishment, in a sense. I think there are many establishments in our society today; they seem to me to be based on, if you compare them with other societies, on

sterner stuff and more valid measures than is the case with other societies. They are not based entirely on titles or wealth or birth.

Q: It's at least open?

BATTLE: It's open and there's nobility within them, and it is never totally closed. I think that is good. I think there is an establishment, has been a foreign policy establishment, in a sense; but I think it has been based on those factors that I was discussing, of brain power, ability, and courage, and guts and what have you, rather than a little group that created to maintain itself. So it would seem to me. I may not be a—

Q: From an Establishment figure such as yourself, that's—

BATTLE: I said that's what the book said.

Q: I'm just—

BATTLE: I didn't say that; I was just amused by that reference which I just happened to have read a couple of days ago.

Q: I don't want to foreclose you from anything. Is there any subject we haven't dealt with or mentioned?

BATTLE: I don't know whether I've covered everything or not. I think we probably have; we've covered the U.A.R. as far as my services as Ambassador there; we've covered it chronologically, haven't we? I don't think of anything else.

Q: I certainly thank you for your—

BATTLE: I recall—I don't remember whether this was on your tape or the Kennedy tape.

Q: They run together in your mind, I'm sure.

BATTLE: They do, and I also had a number of other people in here over recent days, asking me questions, and I forget with whom I spoke on specifically.

The President and Mrs. Johnson spoke with me at the ranch—we got on the subject of records and personal papers, have I talked with you about this?

Q: No, you haven't. I'd like to talk with you about it.

BATTLE: And I told them, the same thing has been raised by the Kennedy library people, who have asked me for my personal papers. And I said, “I have no personal papers.” I have none. I have turned over, each step of my career, which has been extremely varied; and I've been privileged to have been around during a lot of the great events of our time for the last twenty-five years, and I have in each step of the way, I have turned over whatever I had to the Archives of the United States. I have various personal letters from, in some instances, extremely famous people, extremely intelligent people; but they were written to me in the sense of being—they were non-operational; they had nothing to do with issues before me or before my office at that particular time. I just don't have private papers, I have little notes from various people of renown. I do not consider that it has been my right to have personal papers. I consider that those papers and my actions were the property of the United States government, and the record will speak for itself. I've had people in here talking with me about writing things, and putting down recollections of the Acheson era, and various things; and I have said each time that I simply don't—in a speech I am going to make on a related subject very soon, I'm going to make this disclaimer in the speech: that I have neither in my heart nor in my files such stuff as that kind of book is made of. And this I feel rather strongly about.

I told Mrs. Johnson particularly that it wasn't that I would not be delighted having them become the property of the Johnson Library, certainly for the years that I have served in the Johnson Administration; that would be where they would go, but I don't have any. I turned them over to the Central Files of the Department of State; they go into the Archives.

Q: Where these will also go; insofar as the administration of them is concerned.

BATTLE: I have no cache of documents that are going to shock the world.

Q: No need to look in attics in the future for the Lucius Battle collection?

BATTLE: They won't find any Lucius Battle—you may find a few things, but they'll be strictly personal, and I hope I will have the courage to burn those before I—

Q: I hope you won't. I hope you make them, perhaps, part of your estate under some—

BATTLE: But they are clearly personal. They are clearly personal.

Q: But they're the kind of things that you need to write biographies about famous people, including yourself.

BATTLE: They are letters written to me by a few famous people about issues unrelated to what I was doing at that time. They're things written to me when I was abroad by Dean Acheson, by George Ball, by people of that sort; notes from Mrs. Roosevelt and of other people, handwritten scripts here and there, occasionally witty, amusing comments to me about something that was happening in the world at that time. But they have nothing to do with my responsibilities at the time I was in office, or of my overall responsibilities as a member of the State Department.

Q: No, but they do have a great deal to do with the in-depth personalities of important people, so don't burn them. I mean, wait until your estate is settled and let them go into the Library of Congress or something.

BATTLE: I feel a little bit that those people, every one of them, had an audience if they ever wanted to publish anything. They didn't need to use me as a source of that.

Q: You can believe, though, there will be a lot of people doing in-depth biographies of those characters.

BATTLE: Well, that may be.

End of interview